

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a forest path. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of tall trees, creating a dappled light effect on the path and the surrounding foliage. The trees are mostly evergreens, and the path is narrow and appears to be made of dirt or gravel. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# Early Buddhist Concepts

in today's language

Roberto Arruda

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## I present

this book, which is the result of notes and university papers written at various times and in various situations, which I have kept as something that could one day be organized in an expository way.

The text was composed at the request of my wife, Dedé, who since my adolescence has been paving my *Dharma* with love, kindness, and gentleness so that the long path would be smoother for my stubborn feet.

It is not an academic work, nor a religious text, because I am a rationalist. It is just what I carry with me from many personal pieces of research, analyses, and studies, as an individual object from which I cannot separate myself.

I dedicate it to Dede, to all mine, to Prof. Robert Thurman of Columbia University-NY for his teachings, and to all those to whom this text may in some way do good.

This text suggests reflection. I suggest you read it only when it is in the realm of your intimacy.

This book is not for sale. Digital-PDF version: free download from <https://philpeople.org/profiles/roberto-thomas-arruda>

*There is no fire like lust and no crime like hatred.  
There is no ill like the aggregates and no bliss higher  
than the peace (Dhammapada, verse 202.)*

My eyes, ears, and memories are many  
decades old; my unconscious is countless  
centuries old.

Why this text?



*The Bodhy Tree*  
*Where Siddhartha Gautama meditated*

An adequate Knowledge about what Buddhism is is essential to the education and culture of any person who does not want to be simply another alienated member of a herd that walks blindly amid a technological revolution.

If someone asks you what Buddhism is about, simply say that it is an ancient **humanistic doctrine**. Early Buddhism is that,

nothing more. Also, say that this doctrine is easy to understand and extraordinarily difficult to truly practice.

To understand it with our western minds, you don't need to be fluent in Sanskrit or Pali or consult papyri and parchments in museums' basement. You don't need to shave your hair or wear Oriental clothes. You don't have to eat bamboo stalks, get tattoos on your body, create a Hindi nickname, put mandalas in your office, light incense throughout your house, and utter mantras at sunset to the amazement of your dog. This text is not about esotericism, imaginary mystical rituals, polytheistic immersions, online self-help programs, exotic and miracle religions, or other current fantasies, honest or not, created to exploit the suffering we carry as the humans we are.

It is only a humanistic doctrine called Buddhism, rationally understandable. Know, however, that to practice it, one should dedicate his whole life, without restrictions. Therein lies the fascination that is offered to our mind.

It is possible to understand early Buddhism through modern language and knowledge and establish its relations with contemporary thought and its references.

With this, it becomes possible to deepen and broaden our perception about these millennial principles' compatibility with our modern ways of living and knowing.

The study required for this is quite laborious. Buddhism is a subject underlying a gigantic literary and cultural mountain.

*Meditate; don't delay, lest you regret it later. The Buddha  
- (Sallekha Sutta).*

The closer we get to its original concept, the deeper and more voluminous the excavation we have to do. This mountain has two distinct parts: the scholarly literature (which includes monastic literature) and the standard literature. The entire academic literature is controversial because of the sources' authenticity, linguistic issues, and the quality of translations of ancient documents, cultural and ideological influences, etc. On the other hand, ninety percent of the standard literature is mistaken or false, on the one hand, because it lacks the analytical and critical care of scientific methodology, and on the other hand, because it harbors all kinds of inventions, cultural and cognitive insufficiencies, assumptions and even intentional falsehoods. You can find thousands of literal quotations from Buddha in a quick Google walk; the vast majority are "fake", and whoever comments and propagates them is an impostor. Therefore, our journey must be cautious.

Early Buddhism means the entire content of the philosophical, doctrinal, and socio-cultural movement initiated and developed by Siddhartha Gautama (Lumbini, Nepal - 563 BC) up to the Kalinga War (India - 260 BC).

After that date, many things happened around or as a consequence of Siddhartha Gautama's teachings, without adding anything relevant to his doctrine, simply because it was always a complete system, to which nothing was lacking and to which nothing should be added.

However, after the Kalinga War, as we shall see, a series of cultural, political, economic, and religious facts and interests from the various Vedic, Brahmin, and other cultures became familiar with Buddhism and began to extract fragments, concepts, texts, arguments, references, and other elements from it.



Many currents and schools have arisen quickly, such as the Mahayana, Sarvastivada, Maitreya, Madhyana, Yogacara, Tantra, and many others, taking parts or fragments of the early Buddhism into the cauldron of other concepts.

Thus, Buddhism came to be characterized by effervescent cultural relativity and religious contamination, which can be seen in the countless variants it acquired over time. The more this relativity has grown, the less perceptible it becomes early Buddhism, which is the only set of concepts that interests us.

A relevant example of this miscegenation between Buddhism and the Hindu and Vedic context is the Mahayana current, which arose in the second century BC. This current of thought, which preserved the fundamental concepts of Buddhism, constituted its first great bifurcation, adding to it an entire archetypal mythological context represented by archaic divinizations adapted to relative cultural circumstances, besides proposing a division of the original Buddhist cosmology into two parts: the **individual vehicle**, corresponding to the original teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, and the **universal vehicle**. The chain began with the monk Nagarjuna, in the form of a set of concepts and teachings that Siddhartha had reserved to be revealed only in the future, and that, twenty generations after his death, were now being delivered to him, Nagarjuna, as a revelation. The bearers of the revelation would be semi-divinities called Nagas (which is also the name of an ancient Sri Lankan tribe), who have a polymorphic body that is half serpent and half man. With this morphology, these serpents can be both beneficial and evil. Siddhartha is said to have left these originally secret teachings in the care of the Nagas so that they could, in due course, deliver them to the one who would be indicated, in this case, Nagarjuna himself.

Undoubtedly, the narratives about Nagarjuna are structured symbolically within a culture full of myths, and therefore cannot be interpreted literally.

It can be seen that whatever qualities the worldview presented by Nagarjuna may have, the extent of these miscegenations has submerged early Buddhism in mythological beliefs, folk superstitions, and other influences it a messianic bias.

Some historians believe that these miscegenations made Buddhism more acceptable to Hindu societies, including its symbols, language, and mythological traits rooted in their cultures. This may have been the case, but the fact is that these miscegenations in many cases made their original Buddhist core obscured and indeed antagonistic to the whole. In other words, there was no miscegenation but rather mergers, in which much of the Buddhist essence melted away. With the passing of history, these currents have been successively subdivided into institutions, philosophical schools, religions, sects, and cultures, becoming generically called Buddhism, although a large part of them had no relevant relationships to the original teachings of Siddhartha Gautama.

Succinctly, we can establish three significant periods in which all this occurred: 1) from 500 BC to 200 BC - Monastic Buddhism, also called "individual vehicle," because it

*Look at the rivers between the rocks and crevices: in the small channels they flow noisily, and in the big beds they go on silently. Whatever is not full is noisy. Whatever is full is silent. The Buddha (Nipata Sutta)*

centered its doctrine on human life, and which we call "early Buddhism," the object of this text; 2) from 200 BC to 500 AD - Messianic Buddhism (because it derived from the alleged teachings brought to Nagarjuna by the Sagas), or "universal vehicle," for having presented an expansive cosmological doctrine; 3) from 500 AD to 1000 AD - esoteric universalistic Buddhism, or apocalyptic style (coming from revelation), from which resulted in the Tantra current and its many derivations. With modernity, these variants have been aspired to by various mystical-magical cultures, beliefs, and practices, such as Zen culture, Western esotericism, etc.

With each of these divisions or contaminations, the gap between true Buddhism and these wandering thoughts increased proportionately, making them more distant from reality as far as Buddhism itself. Today, any fitness center or esoteric gadget shop thinks it can talk about Buddhism and its practices. Stay away from both, unless you just look for a more shapely "butt" or cheap decorative objects of dubious taste.

Therefore, to understand Buddhism at its roots, we must close our path to a time before these events, precisely at the beginning of the second century BC, and definitively discard any interest in these endless variants, especially the more modern ones. Otherwise, we will get lost in a kaleidoscope where religion get confused with fantasy, philosophy with folklore, research with imagination, and so on.

*Overcome anger with serenity; overcome evil with good; overcome greed with generosity; overcome dishonesty with truth. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 223)*

**Here, when we speak of Buddhism, we are referring to something before 250 BC.**

Two things, however, must be registered in this introduction:

- a) The immeasurable expansion of Buddhism throughout Eurasia, and then the Western world, the appearance, and sedimentation of its variants and cultures, was a peaceful millenarian movement, without involvement or causality with violence, wars, and conflicts. The pacifism of the Buddhist doctrine prevailed over everything that history put before it.
- b) The process of expansion of Buddhism proves what historical science claims today: human history is not made of chapters where time is the reference, but of successive layers, where content accumulates.

What occurred with Buddhism differs from anything involving the development and expansion of humanism and Western cultures.

Take the example of Christianity, the basis of almost all Western civilization. About 350 years after the death of Jesus, Christianity, a humanistic doctrine as much as Buddhism, became the Roman Empire's official religion through the Edict of Thessalonica by Emperor Theodosius I. The fact did not happen because Theodosius became sanctified but because of a successful strategy to control widespread tension and consolidate policies that suited him and the dominant power. To have the people with is the dream of any despot.

Very quickly, the spiritualist doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth (which was already very poorly documented as a result of the persecutions suffered by the first Christian communities) was buried under mountains of economic, political, religious, cultural, and military interests.

The institutions, beliefs, and religions that called themselves Christian had little to do with the Nazarene doctrine. What remained of the historical fragments of the original Christianity remained under lock and key in the inaccessible libraries of the Catholic Church and controlled millenary by the efficient censorship of its theologians to prevent its dissemination, knowledge, and criticism, which would undoubtedly show the immense distance between the doctrine of Jesus and the dogmas and convenient beliefs that sustain the religious institution.

The extent of this religious institutional censorship went to the extreme of creating a cultural aberration that received the popular name of "proscribed gospels" and other documents considered improper or "apocryphal," which could never be seen or were conveniently "lost," although they belonged to humanity. In other words: Men dressed as religious people in the eleventh century thought themselves competent to say what the disciples of Jesus should or should not have said a millennium earlier to favor their prosperous ecclesiastical institution better, eleven centuries later.

*If a person does good, let him do it again and again. Let him find pleasure in it, for blessed is the accumulation of good. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 118)*

With this origin, our Western tradition is since its formation involved, in one way or another, with violence, wars, domination, conquests, colonialism, etc. Since the eleventh century, few Western wars have not been fought in the name of Christianity or used the argument of "catechesis" to justify the states' material and political greed that benefited from it.

Thus, comparing the two traditions from their origins, one can say that Buddhism spread throughout the world with the word of a doctrine, the free service of its schools and universities, and the example of its followers' pacifist life. In contrast, the Christian tradition developed through political-economic power, the sword's force, and the weight of oppression.

Therefore, when we leave our environment of Western cultures to open our gaze to Buddhist traditions, as in this text, we are not talking about another subject, but about another universe that our history has never known

The Buddhism we will talk about is a Sanskrit-Páli term that comes from Buddha and is not an onomastic noun; it is not the name of anyone, even less of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. Buddha is a qualifying adjective meaning someone enlightened, one who has attained enlightenment. Therefore, there are countless Buddhas, as they say of Siddhartha, born before and after him. However, as all scholars do, we will call Siddhartha simply Buddha.

Any interested party can quickly find narratives about Prince Siddhartha's life in any of the many online encyclopedias. Some are at least partly fanciful or romanticized, others contaminated by folkloric or religious elements.

Some cling only to the scriptures and ignore the historical and cultural content, while others limit themselves to the historical

view and do not reach the corresponding philosophical foundation. Several, however, express good research.

It is up to each one to choose what he or she wants. It is up to each one to select the kind of information they want. Here we will seek the best possible simplicity in our everyday language.

At the time of Buddhism's origin, writing was the skill of very few (usually merchants). That is why other resources of representation and expression comprehensible to all were used, alongside writing. It was common the use of chants, dances and body postures, and mainly symbols and images. Thus, Buddhist symbology is extremely rich and varied, and throughout the time, it was incorporated into various cultures, acquiring forms and meanings that varied greatly from one to another. Here we will illustrate the text with some symbols, all originating in the early days of Buddhism and none linked to the "esoteric design" of present times.

Another form of Buddhist doctrine expression was poetry because Buddha claimed that people preferred to hear verses than speeches. So it was also in pre-Socratic Greece: philosophy and poetry as a core of content and expression until Plato caused the divorce between the two.

The way Buddha used language in verse to expound his teachings to his diverse and multicultural audience was very intense and varied. Often the figurations and symbolism with which he expressed certain concepts drew on Vedas

*Everything that has the nature of arising has the nature of ceasing. The Buddha (Kimsuka Sutta).*

imagery and mythical references and other Hindi semiotics elements, while he preserved a rigorous, almost Aristotelian, epistemological discipline.

If this structurally made the hermeneutics of his doctrine difficult for scholars (and still does today), in terms of communicability, it facilitated his understanding by people in general, giving his speeches a captivating simplicity and an easy apprehension.

One of the essential canonical documents of the Buddha's sayings in verse, and therefore one of the most studied when it comes to early Buddhism, is called the **Dhammapada** (which means "The Way of the Dharma"), with 426 verses authored by Siddhartha Gautama.

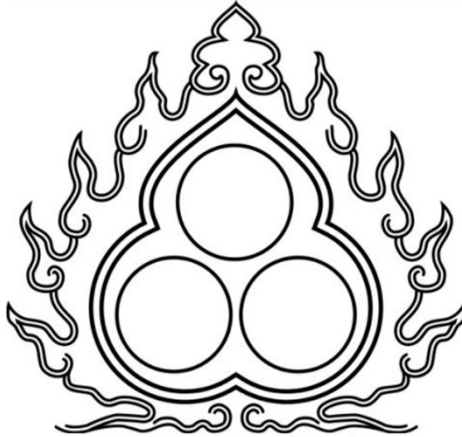
For anyone interested in this precious text, it is found in its entirety in Appendix 2 of this book.

Buddha also discoursed methodically, and his "**Long Discourses**" are canonical pieces of extraordinary importance.

*As I am, so are they. As they are, so am I.' Drawing a parallel with yourself, neither kill nor cause others to kill. The Buddha (Nalaka Sutta),*



## The Three Jewels



*Tiratana - the three Buddhist gems*

The essence of Buddhist thought, its context, and its structure define what is called "The Three Jewels of Buddhism": **the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma (each person's path of growth), and the Sangha (the harmonious Dharma-oriented community)**. This set is called ***Tiratana***.

We will follow the trail of the three jewels as the methodological script for this text.

Understanding it means acquiring a fairly broad fundamental knowledge of Buddhism. Enough to get you started on your path, never sufficient to get you to the end.

## The First Jewel (The teachings)

### The reality and the truth

The Buddha's teachings (or the first jewel, or first element of Tiratana)) are so many, so broad and deep that a robust knowledge of them would require a lifetime of study and practice, unattainable for our turbulent modern urban life.

However, he did not teach only monks and ascetics who live entirely meditative lives and reside in the inaccessible peaks of distant mountain ranges. These are the ones who, by personal decision, have abandoned their ordinary lives and given themselves definitively and without limits to this knowledge and practice. They are the ones who look after the teachings and traditions and preserve these contents for millennia, enriched by their ongoing studies.

Buddha, with the exact words and thoughts, taught his doctrine also to us, ordinary, western men, born 2,500 years after his death, with our urban neuroses and modernities, tired and confused inside a subway car at the end of an almost unbearable day of work, in a hysterical and violent world of senseless cultures. As much as the distant monks, we can understand it in our circumstances of culture, time, and space because the instrument we use for this exists in every human being since the beginning of the species: a mind that

can be opened to knowledge, growth, evolution, happiness, and harmony with all that exists. We have to use our minds; everything else is a consequence.

The Buddha's teachings are addressed to all men, no matter which ones, when, and where. Buddhism is a **universal and timeless** doctrine.

Before we begin, and to avoid semantic misunderstandings, it is necessary to clarify that the Buddhist teachings employ common and usual terms in any language. Still, some may have a meaning that does not correspond precisely to that given to the term as generally employed in everyday language. A few terms are often used in a particular sense, requiring our attention in their employment because we will come across them several times. The main ones are as follows:

**Illumination:** It does not correspond to the common sense of receiving light, inspiration, vibration, or energy from an external source that can act upon us.

In Buddhism, it corresponds to a mental state of the individual reached by himself, without any external interference, whether material or not, resulting from full knowledge of himself and his internal and external reality. Consequently, his human sufferings are wholly overcome, and the individual achieves the dilution of his identity in full harmony with everything he is related to. It is the culmination of his evolution, which incorporates him

*Just gray hair does not make one wise; that is simply old age, someone who has aged in vain. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 260)*

into the whole, dissolves his "self," and makes it unnecessary for him to continue his individual human experience. Thus enlightenment is not a divine gift, something inherited, nor a miracle or revelation, from the gods, but the fruit of an individual human effort to improve and deepen each life daily through knowledge, ethics, reality, and truth.

**Truth:** Buddhist "Truths" are factual: they are not theological or metaphysical beliefs, convictions, dogmas, or concepts. They are not dictated or revealed by any deity. They are the fruit of rational observation of reality: simple facts and events that can be objectively verified by empirical observation and phenomenological. Truth is everything that our reason can effectively and critically ascertain.

**Reality:** The meaning of reality is the material foundation of truth, the fact, the phenomenon in itself, whose observation and knowledge allow the acquisition of consciousness. It means the result of a person's mental state, strictly circumscribed to the present moment and dependent on the level and direction of the individual's attention, determined by a specific cerebral state.

Suffering: is the state of dissatisfaction, maladjustment, or restlessness of the individual arising from his ignorance of the present reality, attachment to obsessions arising from past events, fantasies of the imaginary future, of the existence of the self, and recurrent desire for impermanent things. Suffering is the consequence of attachment.

*Just as the storm does not shake a solid rock, so the wise are not affected by praise or offense. The Buddha, (Dhammapada )*

**Happiness:** Our current concepts of happiness are linked to the satisfaction of desires, the attainment of goals, or acquiring something. For Buddhism, happiness is opposed to what we think of because what we think of, for Buddha, meant only **attachment**. Happiness in Buddhist thought means precisely detachment, liberation from the psychological need for possession and mastery, and essentially from the illusion of the self, from the belief in the self's existence as an isolated being.

Buddha repeated this teaching insistently, given its doctrinal importance.

For Buddha, the predecessor of what is now the philosophy of mind, repetition was necessary, always.

**Desire and attachment:** Unlike most traditional ethical concepts, desire itself in Buddhism, including carnal desire, is not stereotyped as something abject, immoral, or sinful per se, but rather seen as a natural response to suffering, the value of which lies not in it but in how it may manifest itself. The texts are pretty clear in dealing with the "middle way," the way of balance:

One should not seek sensual pleasures that are low, vulgar, gross, ignoble, and of no benefit, and one should not seek mortification that is painful, ignoble, and of no help. The Middle Way discovered by the Tathagata avoids both extremes, providing insight, knowledge, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, and Nibbana. (The Buddha - Aranavibhanga Sutta. The Analysis of Non-conflict)

So much so that Siddhartha Gautama refers negatively and several times to the "anxious desire" that causes suffering, thus differentiating it from pure and simple desire, a phenomenon that is part of our physiology and mind.

Recent psychoanalytic studies argue that to refer to the causes of suffering, Buddha used the word "simtanhā," which does not mean "desire," but implies "thirst" or "longing," configuring **attachment**. Among contemporary scholars, there are several conceptualizations of "attachment," which generally converge on what we might call the attempt to hold on to an experience that cannot be retained or attained, rather than the desire for happiness or completeness itself.

These conceptualizations are correct, but they are formulations that clarify what desire is, confuse the notion of attachment. Attachment is one of the most precise and fundamental concepts in Buddhist doctrine and teachings. However, it is common to confuse attachment with love, which is another mistake: when you want the good of something or someone you love; when you want something or someone for yourself, you get attached.

Therefore, in our language, attachment is understood as something that expresses three attitudes: the **feeling of possession, the desire for domination, and lust**. In these attitudes, the three poisons of the mind reside, as we will see later.

Like the Three Jewels, the Buddha's **teachings** are supported and presented on three pillars that express their entire content: **the Three Universal Truths, the Four Noble Truths, and the Dharma**.

## The Three Universal Truths

They are the **principle of impermanence and the nature of emptiness, the principle of suffering, and the principle of the non-existence of the self and the eternal soul.**

The three universal truths have an axiological structure and express Buddhism's essential concepts, besides being the most difficult to understand. Understanding them requires attention and reflection, often complex and tiring, but without which we will know nothing of Siddhartha Gautama's thought, except its surface, usually displayed in a folkloric way and even trivialized by fads of all kinds.

Buddha teaches these in the following way:

*a) Everything that exists is transitory and constantly changing; nothing is everlasting; reality is empty;*



*The lotus flower: Buddhism's universal symbol*

*b) Suffering is an inherent part of human life and is a consequence of ignorance of reality and attachment to transitory things;*

*c) There is no stable individuality nor an eternal and unchanging individual soul. The "self", the individual, does not exist in isolation.*

*Individuals are illusions.*

*There is only in each being a structure of changing characteristics and attributes, incorporated into the whole, in conjunction and interdependence with all other living beings.*

The statement of the first of these truths is called the "**principle of impermanence and the nature of emptiness**," and it arises from the Buddhist doctrine of the non-existence of the soul, called "**Anatta**," or the "non-self" or "non-soul."

We have to understand it understandably, without which there is no point in proceeding.

The first time someone reads these statements, it is expectable that they feel utterly confused and think that they will never understand what Buddha meant by it. They are conclusive statements without any argument or syllogism to allow for critical analysis. They are irrational statements, which come out of nowhere, like dogmas or profession of beliefs, and whose enunciation does not show any coherence with what we understand by reality.

In the search for research and interpretation elements, some confuse people even more, but others, little by little, begin to make some sense and end up showing the compelling coherence of what seemed to be only the absurd.

With my many intellectual limitations, it is not me who could present a logical explanation for all this. The burden of human knowledge is short, and in truth, we know very little about very few things. For the rest, we are all ignorant. However, Ignorance has no beginning but can have an end, and we can overcome it with the proper effort to open the door to understanding things.



*Avoiding doing evil, cultivating good, purifying the heart:  
this is the teaching of the Buddhas. The Buddha  
(Dhammapada verse 183)*

Knowledge is the beloved child of persistence, just as ignorance is the spurious offspring of laziness.

I expose here, therefore, only those elements that for other authors and me constructed and attributed logical meaning to the Buddha's statements, for which solid aspects of support were found in modern science, especially in quantum physics, in the neurosciences, and the nascent scientific cosmology. If Buddha was a scientific realist, we must seek the content of his expressions in science and not in revelations, myths, rites, and legends.

Everything is based on how we see the universe and ourselves, and what is incomplete about this observation. The Buddhist doctrine invites us to perceive what we call reality from another angle, with another posture and another scope, different from the ones we have received by tradition.

We have been taught that the universe is made of three components: matter, which bodies or objects are made of (which is molecular in nature and stable), energy (which is waving in nature and is unstable), and space (which is nothing at all). Our understanding is that the whole consists of bodies or objects, energies, and space. Even Galileo Galilei saw it this way. Buddha contradicted this simplistic cosmology by saying in Sanskrit, 2,500 years ago, precisely what Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794) said in French in

the 18th century of our era, under the title of Law of Conservation of Masses:

*"In nature, nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything is transformed."*

What Buddha said in other terms and what Lavoisier confirmed with his experiments seems simple. It would be enough to understand and accept that everything changes, to proclaim the core of the first Buddhist truth: "Everything that exists is transitory and constantly changing. But it is not that simple.

What Buddha and Lavoisier said had no relation to the cosmology that we have received by tradition. What they said addressed concepts of a much more complex and scientifically verifiable worldview. According to this worldview, it was necessary to review the existing notions about the universe's components in which we live.

Both were ahead of their time. What Buddha told us is that there is no such thing as a universe made of matter and isolated bodies (which are molecular and stable), of energy (which is waving and is unstable), and of space separating the bodies (which is nothing at all).

According to his teaching, the matter is essentially unstable and is not limited to a molecular structure. In the same way, there are no isolated bodies, nor is space considered to be

*He who brakes the growing anger as a coachman brakes the moving carriage, that one I call a true coachman. The others merely hold the reins. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 222)*

the absence of matter and energy. According to him, Energy is neither wavy nor unstable; it is vibrational and stable, and the space separating bodies does not exist because there are no bodies to separate.

With these components, the universe is not a conglomeration of objects and energy; **the universe is a systemic and continuous whole**, and in truth, matter and energy are the same, differentiated only by degrees of vibrational concentration.

Since what Lavoisier and Buddha stated applies to both matter and energy, they both conclude that this cosmological system has its balance.

Everything that exists in this system has existed since the origin of the universe. Nothing has been added to it; nothing has been subtracted from it.

My body did not make the carbon molecules in my hands: they have existed for many millions of years. The sunlight that illuminates me was vibrationally generated millions of years ago and now reaches me. It is the same vibrational frequency that brightened the afternoons of Ramses III, just as much as my carbon molecules may have been in Cleopatra's hair.

*As a drop of water on a lotus leaf or water on a red lily does not cling, so the sage does not cling to what he sees, what he hears, or what he feels. The Buddha (Sutta Nipata).*

Thus seeing the universe as a continuous, changing and dynamic system, one wonders what, then, would be the bodies we see, animate and inanimate, which to our perception are distant and separate from each other?

These distances and separations are our minds' product, elaborated from our perception's limitations, caused by the sensory inability to grasp the various forms of energy and particles of matter that make the system continuous.

Bodies and objects are points of higher concentration of vibrational energy and molecular matter, greater or lesser complexity, and extension, resulting from the constant systemic flow of the universe's expansion. These points are formed by the very dynamics of the cosmic systemic process.

All these concentration points are unstable and diluted in the systemic flow once they reach their evolutionary function, determined by the system's movement. Thus, all we see as matter or bodies is nothing but a functional and unstable molecular-energy accumulation. Between what we call bodies, there is no space because matter and energies are continuous. Between my body and yours, there is no space,

*The world is afflicted by death and decay. But the sage is not afflicted, having realized the nature of the world. The Buddha (Nipata Sutta)*

because space does not exist, there are only systemic stretches of lower energy and molecular matter concentrations, which do **not suffer interruption**. The matter is continuous between you and me. In our case, there are between us at least molecules of oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, floating acids, and various vibrational energies, thermal, luminous, sound, etc., which also exist in more significant proportions in our bodies that we thought were separated by a space and made of different contents, but are not.

In this way, our bodies do not exist as separate and stable bodies or objects. We are just concentration points in a considerable flow where everything is part of a systemic whole, and we are interrelated with everything else that exists. The air that you breathe out may contain calcium molecules that tomorrow may be part of my teeth. There is no cell in our bodies that have been in them for more than seven years.

The difference between your body and the tree in your garden is only in the gradation of complexity and energy accumulation, nothing else.

*Slaves to their desires, men go downstream carried by the current, just like a spider that falls into the web woven by itself. Steady people withdraw from the world when they are detached, and, putting aside all suffering, they do not look back. The Buddha - (Dhammapada)*

In this immense system in constant mutation, no atom and no vibration disappear, just as none is created. However, everything transforms at each instant, integrating itself to the point of concentration or being eliminated from it. Nothing is born, nothing dies, and one's life is only the short stability of some concentration point circumstantially necessary to some cosmic subsystem.

Several of the Buddha's statements are receiving increasing shelter from quantum mechanics and other modern scientific fields.

Kenneth Chan, in a recently published article ("A Direct Experiential Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics") highlights this approach between the Buddhist tradition and contemporary science:

*"The formulation of quantum mechanics actually does not suggest a mind-matter dichotomy at all, and it certainly does not suggest materialism or solipsism. Quantum mechanics actually points to a middle ground between these two extremes of materialism and solipsism, an understanding that Werner Heisenberg and Wolfgang Pauli finally reached. This means that the formulation of quantum mechanics actually points to the philosophical viewpoint of Buddhist Madhyamika philosophy, also known as the philosophy of the Middle Way. The Madhyamika philosophy would allow us to include the role of consciousness in quantum physics without ending up at the extremes of solipsism or materialism."*

*In this paper, the formulation of quantum mechanics is explicitly interpreted in terms of Madhyamaka philosophy, and this can be done directly, without any modifications to the original formulation of quantum mechanics, and without the need for additional ad hoc conditions. In other words, we can have a direct experiential interpretation of quantum mechanics that fits perfectly with Madhyamaka philosophy. Thus, in addition to being supported by extremely precise logical analysis and deep meditational insight, there is now also concrete scientific evidence that the Madhyamaka view of reality is correct."* (in <http://kenneth-chan.com/physics/direct-experiential-interpretation-of-quantum-mechanics> - retrieved on Mar. 05,2021). Translation by the Author)

Life, therefore, is nothing more than a brief concentration of energy essentially related to everything else that exists.

Such a concept, whether it offends our beliefs or not, is fully demonstrated by modern physics. They are verified facts, explained reality. These are not opinionated matters; they are what they are.

The elements we have gathered so far are the same as those that support the second element, or statement, of the first universal truth: **reality is empty**, which does not mean that it is necessarily nonexistent.

Reality is regarded by the Buddha, as much as by modern science, as the result of a person's mental state, strictly circumscribed to the present moment and dependent on

the level and direction of the individual's attention, determined by a specific brain state. There is no absolute, objective reality formulated externally to the individual. You and I can cross the same street together at the exact moment. My attention will turn to the pedestrian light on the other side of the road because I am afraid of being run over, and I will not notice the woman in the red blouse next to me. You will turn your attention to the white shoes of the man in front of you because you wish you had ones like them, and you will pay no attention to the traffic light nor to the delinquent who approaches to steal your purse.

We will arrive together across the street having experienced two profoundly different realities, acting differently in the face of the same stimuli, and we may ask ourselves, "Which is reality: mine or yours?"

Knowing today how the neuro-cerebral-perceptive process works, neuroscience and experimental psychology, like Buddha, eliminate both the past (stored in the individual's memory retainers) and the future from the concept of reality. The inclusion of data stored in memory for the formulation of reality resembles an obsession in that its contents no longer exist and therefore cannot guide the perceptual mental state in the present. The future, in turn, is merely imaginary and strongly influenced by biases, desires, and fears, not composing the concept of reality in any way

*Irradiate boundless love to the whole world. The Buddha  
(Metta-Sutta)*



Thus, limited to the mental state resulting from each moment's perceptual processes, the reality is exceptionally volatile, can change abruptly every second, and retains no stable content or that can be reincorporated into another moment.

Thus, the reality is empty and limited to the perception and analysis of the current moment. This thought is consistent with several recent neurosciences and cognitive psychology trends that more incisively raise the hypothesis of the non-existence of reality, precisely because of its volatile and inconsistent nature, already pointed out by Buddha.

Buddha insistently taught that a healthy, structured mind is wholly and permanently directed to the present moment, without ever distancing itself from it for any reason. The meaning is the absence of matter and energy. According to him, the idea is what he called "right concentration," one of the eight paths of the Dharma. Simply put, everything Buddha wanted to tell us about the mind can be summarized in one word: **discipline**.

The Second Universal Truth statement is concerned with the **principle of suffering** as inherent in human life and a product of man himself through his mind.

*One by one, little by little, every moment a wise man should remove his own defilements, just as a blacksmith removes the defilements from silver. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 239)*

The Buddhist scriptures define suffering as follows:

*"Now what, friends, is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful; aging is stressful; death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful.<sup>2</sup> In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.*

*"And what is birth? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of (sense) spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.*

*"And what is aging? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.*

*"And what is death? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break-up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.*

*"And what is sorrow? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.*

"And what is lamentation? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

"And what is pain? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

"And what is distress? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

"And what is despair? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

"And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by

*wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.*

*"And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrication clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.*

*"This, friends, is called the noble truth of stress. »*

("Saccavibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Truths" (MN 141), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.141.than.html> . Link to copyright license: © 2005)

Our modern understanding of human suffering fits entirely into these concepts. Human beings' biological and existential conditions, and notably their necessary association for survival, mean enormous pressure on the individual's physical and psychic structure, from birth to death. The individual's physical survival imposes a series of efforts, often of extreme complexity and almost unattainable execution. Neurologically much more complex than other animals in their natural environment, the struggle for humans' survival contains physical efforts and instinctive responses and immense psychic, mental, and behavioral tasks.

For the reason that he carries in his genome the entire history of the species and its instinctive and evolutionary structures,

the human being is still faced with the task of adapting them to his broad psychic and cognitive capacities, capable of storing, evaluating, and qualifying the information from all his experiences

individual. Besides, it needs to interrelate all this context with the contexts of all the other individuals and the environment in which it lives.

As if this were not enough, man also carries the cruel faculty of designing the reality he wants with his imagination, at which level he becomes an alienated creature.

If we could see the human being sketched out on a drawing board, we would have the feeling of being in front of an impossible machine, a crazy project, an aberration of the mind.

However, since we come from nature and seem to have no sense in ourselves, instincts and hormones tell us to live and fight for all that intimidates, frightens, and crushes us. We call the "human condition," and our effort caused by it we call "suffering."

We thus learn to see suffering as imposed by nature, as something **external** that harms us and causes pain and discomfort. Something comes from the outside, from nature and other individuals, and that we don't want.

*Don't underestimate evil by thinking, "It won't hit me. For just as drop by drop a pot is filled, so the fool is filled with evil little by little accumulated. The Buddha - (Dhammapada, verse 121)*

Buddhism can understand all this causal structure of reality, but it strongly disagrees with our view of suffering. Buddha was always emphatic and attributed to one's own mind the suffering one carries, and this is central to his doctrine.

There are undoubtedly objective and cognizable causes for suffering in Buddhism, but it depends essentially on how each sees those causes and how they react to each one of them. Thus, suffering does not exist as an external and objective phenomenon; instead, each person's suffering is caused by himself through his mind's action. Suffering is not a verb that is conjugated in the plural but a mental state that can only be spoken of in the singular. Based on this axial foundation, Buddha teaches three things: a) regardless of its external contexts, the cause of suffering is the ignorance of its true causes and effects; b) it is possible to know the causes of suffering and its consequences through knowledge, through true, deep, critical introspection of reality; c) once the causes and consequences of suffering are critically known, it is possible to minimize or even eliminate it.

The Buddhist argument implicitly affirms that there are **internal causes of suffering** in each person, determining the effects of possible external causes. Besides the rational ignorance about its causes, the following elements can increase the formation of suffering: an undisciplined

*All conditioned beings are impermanent." One who knows this frees himself from the bondage of suffering. This is the Path of Purity. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 277)*

possession and domination, the absence of an ethical structure, a psyche that is not critically rationalized, mind, attachment to the illusion of "self" as an isolated being with no necessary relationship with other beings, feelings of behavioral postures such as pride, narcissism, greed, contempt, lack of empathy, avarice, hatred, and violence.

The enormous majority of religious doctrines stick almost exclusively to the external causes of suffering, and in general attribute mystical, and imaginary causes to them, such as punishments for offenses against the deity, overdue bills of the individual, originating from disrespect for the precepts in previous lives, insufficient praise and appeals to the gods and other minor deities, etc.

Moreover, they proclaim submission to suffering and its acceptance because that is how the gods want it and deserve it. Without this humble submission, we will never have entry to the promised eternal life, in which there is only satisfaction.

In a diametrically opposite way, for Buddhism, suffering is a mental and individual process that must be unaccepted, fought against, and purged by the people who have developed them in their minds as an actual disease. Life does not lend itself to paying imaginary debts, dissecting delusional fears, or receiving scourges by the deities' will. Life exists to express happiness and joy.

On the other hand, happiness and joy do not mean the satisfaction of desires and the receipt of rewards. Still, the perception and more profound knowledge of life and ourselves, achieving the most excellent possible harmony and integration with all the beings with whom we interrelate. Such interrelation can happen with a disciplined and healthy mind, without the personal defects that prevent us from this.

and free from the obsessions and phobias stored in the past that does not exist, and from the delusions of an imaginary future that possibly will never exist—ignorance and attachment: the two mental seeds of suffering.

When Buddha finally makes the enunciation of his Third Universal Truth, he opens the scenario that has caused and still causes endless discussions in science and philosophy, in cosmology and religions, and even within Buddhism itself: **the principle of the non-existence of the "self" and the eternal soul.**

By denying the reality of a being that exists in isolation and distinctly, of a body that we think is physical and stable, and of an individual essence that precedes the body's existence (or arises with its birth) and remains after its death, the Buddha denies an identity to the individual in the sense that all cultures have understood it at any time.

Faced with the development of Buddhist arguments and findings, Enlightenment ideas such as Cartesian dualism seem like a simple equivocation frozen in time, and the

The most recent and disturbing discoveries in neuroscience and neuropsychology bring the feeling that we are unraveling what was said more than two millennia ago.

*"By himself, evil is done; by himself, one becomes defiled. By oneself, one ceases to do evil; by oneself, one becomes pure. Purity and impurity depend on ourselves; no one can purify another." - The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 165)*



*Belief in an eternal soul is a misconception  
of the human consciousness.*

*The Soul Theory*

By The Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera. Source: Buddhist Study and Practice Group, <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/>  
Retrieved from <https://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbeliev/115.htm>  
on Mar. 10, 2021

*With regard to the soul theory, there are three kinds of teachers in the world:*

- *The first teacher teaches the existence of an eternal ego-entity that outlasts death: He is the eternalist.*
- *The second teacher teaches a temporary ego-entity which becomes annihilated at death: He is the materialist.*
- *The third teacher teaches neither an eternal nor a temporary ego-entity: He is the Buddha. The Buddha teaches that what we call ego, self, soul, personality, etc., are merely conventional terms that do not refer to any real, independent entity. According to Buddhism there is no reason to believe that there is an eternal soul that comes from heaven or that is created by itself and that will transmigrate or proceed*

*straight away either to heaven or hell after death. Buddhists cannot accept that there is anything either in this world or any other world that is eternal or unchangeable. We only cling to ourselves and hope to find something immortal. We are like children who wish to clasp a rainbow. To children, a rainbow is something vivid and real; but the grown-ups know that it is merely an illusion caused by certain rays of light and drops of water. The light is only a series of waves or undulations that have no more reality than the rainbow itself.*

*Man has done well without discovering the soul. He shows no signs of fatigue or degeneration for not having encountered any soul. No man has produced anything to promote mankind by postulating a soul and its imaginary working. Searching for a soul in man is like searching for something in a dark empty room. But the poor man will never realize that what he is searching for is not in the room. It is very difficult to make such a person understand the futility of his search.*

*Those who believe in the existence of a soul are not in a position to explain what and where it is. The Buddha's advice is not to waste our time over this unnecessary speculation and devote our time to strive for our salvation. When we*

*have attained perfection then we will be able to realize whether there is a soul or not»*

By denying the individual's earthly and eternal identity in this way, a huge debate is created around seemingly insurmountable conceptual conflicts generated by the words of Siddhartha Gautama:

1 - If Buddha spoke of deities, how can one deny a creator god, eternal and stable?

2 - If Buddha spoke of reincarnation and rebirth, how can it be said that there is no stable, and therefore eternal, soul?

3 - If Buddha said that life is eternal and spoke about "several successive lives," how can we deny eternity to our individual life?

4 - If Buddha referred to heaven and hell, how can these negatives be sustained?

By quietly going through the Buddhist canons that have most addressed these issues, and by researching the opinions of scholars who have delved deeply into these texts for years and years, we can conclude that Buddha did say all of this (just read the Dhammapada), but he didn't say any of the things that our anthropocentric ears think they heard or would like to have heard.

Any syllable spoken by the Buddha, to be understood, must be carefully analyzed for linguistics, semantics, context, time, purpose, equivalence, canonical compatibility, culture, paradigm, and purpose. Buddha may have said anything, but only after this patient inquiry can we say that Buddha did or did not say "A".

All these studies show that Buddha said nothing of what we commonly understand about these delicate concepts. What would he have said, then?

About the reference to deities, I believe first of all (although I speak neither Sanskrit nor Malay) that it can be challenging to write an entire paragraph in one of these two languages without referring even briefly to some deity. This is because of their cultures' immense, mystical richness, the extraordinary symbolism they extract from nature, and the incomparable tendency to divinize that this signifies, mirrored in all their behavior and language. But let the unwary avoid two foolish ideas: that these divinizations refer to external and supernatural entities and that they are mere folkloric fantasies. They would be making a gross error.

The deities of which Buddha spoke received in the middle of the 20th century, from psychologist Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud's companion, the designation **archetypes**, content of our collective unconscious transmitted from generation to generation by the human genome, and which the individual acquires without the need for any individual experience.

With admirable lucidity, Lama Thubten Yeshe wrote:

*" The entities of Tantric meditation should not be confused with what different mythologies and religions may mean when they speak of gods and goddesses. Here, the deity we choose to identify with represents the essential qualities of the awakened experience that is latent within us.*

*To use the language of psychology, such a deity is an **archetype** of our deepest nature, our deepest level of consciousness.*

*In Tantra we focus our attention on this archetypal image and identify with it in order*

*to reach the deepest aspects of our being and bring them into our present reality"* (Introduction to Tantra: A vision of Totality (1987) pg. 42 Author's translation.

Buddha did talk about these divinities, and a lot, even because he was a precursor of psychoanalysis.

As for rebirth and reincarnation, we must separate things. Buddha never spoke of a rebirth/reincarnation binomial. He said only one word: rebirth.

Reincarnation was spoken of only by the imagination of men, at their pleasure.

Reincarnation is a concept present in some traditional religions and modern schools of thought, such as theosophy, which essentially maintains the belief that we have a dualistic individuality: a perishable body and an imperishable mind, essence, or soul, which are separated at death. The physical part dies irreversibly, and the essence, mind, or soul is incorporated into another body, maintaining its individuality and identity. This reincorporation or reincarnation may occur immediately after death or happen in the indefinite future (such as the dead's resurrection for Christianity).

Buddha never said a syllable that endorsed this kind of thinking; he always strongly repudiated ontologically that

*The fool who is aware of his foolishness is, to some extent, wise. But a fool who considers himself wise is really foolish;  
The Buddha (Dhammapada varsicle 63)*

anything could be permanent, be it the identity of the individual human or the universe itself. Buddha did never accepted the dualistic (two parts: body/essence) ontologic concepts. He spokes about **rebirth**, which is something else entirely. In the abundant religious and secular literature around the subject, we often find texts that claim that Buddha spoke about reincarnation and rebirth and that rebirth is a « kind of reincarnation .» These are manifestations of ignorance. Rebirth and reincarnation have no conceptual relationship, neither resembles the other nor is a kind of the other, and they are mutually exclusive concepts.

It is essential, then, that we understand what Buddha called rebirth.

According to Buddha's doctrine, the correct, simpler, doctrinal understanding is that everything that lives is inserted in a cycle of deaths and rebirths (emanations) called **Samsara**. where energies and their contents are continuously transformed and shifted, aggregating themselves into new structures or beings. It is the march of the ongoing expansion and evolution of the universe: "nothing is created, nothing is lost; everything is transformed." In this cycle, the rebirth described by Buddhism is a transmissible inheritance of **impermanent aggregates** generated by individuals rather than their

*Come, look at this world. It is like a royal carriage, painted and ornamented. Fools sink into it. Those with discernment are not deceived by it. The Buddha (Dhammapada ver. 171)*

Identity, whatever it is, is not permanent and disappears at death. These aggregates are energies and vibrations emanating from the consciousness (or mental state) while the individual was alive, such as their moral values, desires, beliefs, attachments, dominant emotions, and behavioral patterns.

This understanding of rebirth as a cycle of consciousness is consistent with Buddhist concepts such as **anicca** (impermanence), **dukkha** (suffering), **anatta** (identitylessness) and shows the concept of **karma** as a link of cause and consequence of these mental states.

Other usual and more extensive understandings of the meaning of rebirth may conflict with many other conceptual contents of Buddhism. besides finding no canonical support

When Buddha spoke about rebirth, this concept was merely philosophical. However, we can now view it through the lens of modern science and understand that its content relates to other evidence already developed by energy physics laws.

According to Buddhist teaching, the individual's mental state is an **energy system**, or a set of specific energies interrelated to each other, which he called an impermanent aggregate, that is, a clearly defined energy system (aggregate) that has

*But there is one impurity worse than all the others -; ignorance is the worst impurity. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 243)*

no permanent stability. The energetic aggregate is not destroyed at the moment of the individual's death, and its contents are transformed into another type of energy. What Buddha called **rebirth**, as declared by him 2,500 years ago, today is part of the basic literature of any high school course:

*« In physics and chemistry, the law of conservation of energy states that the total energy of an isolated system remains constant; it is said to be conserved over time. This law, first proposed and tested by Émilie du Châtelet, means that energy can neither be created nor destroyed; rather, it can only be transformed or transferred from one form to another. For instance, chemical energy is converted to kinetic energy when a stick of dynamite explodes. If one adds up all forms of energy that were released in the explosion, such as the kinetic energy and potential energy of the pieces, as well as heat and sound, one will get the exact decrease of chemical energy in the combustion of the dynamite. Classically, conservation of energy was distinct from conservation of mass; however, special relativity showed that mass is related to energy and vice versa by  $E = mc^2$ , and science now takes the view that mass-energy as a whole is conserved. Theoretically, this implies that any object with mass can itself be converted to pure energy, and vice versa,*



*though this is believed to be possible only under the most extreme of physical conditions, such as likely existed in the universe very shortly after the Big Bang or when black holes emit Hawking radiation. »*  
 ( [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservation\\_of\\_energy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservation_of_energy) )

The law of conservation of energy is only applicable to an isolated energy system, that is, whose limits have been defined, from which its mathematical representation becomes possible, which was first made by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz around 1680, and perfected by Thomas Young in 1807, with the following expression:

$$\frac{1}{2} \sum_i m_i v_i^2$$

The Buddhist concept establishes the individual's mental state's energetic system as an impermanent (changing) aggregate of energetic elements generated by personal experience (feelings, instincts, emotions, behaviors, desires, beliefs, memories). The doctrine claims that the individual's mental state (energetic aggregate) is not destroyed at the moment of his death but instead transformed into another type of energy that will aggregate into some other form of life, called rebirth.

This conceptualization is not at odds with the fundamental statement of the principle of conservation of energy in modern physics.

In terms of physics, we must also consider that the application of Young's formula presupposes the quantification of the energy in question. This is still missing from the mathematical demonstration of the Buddhist argument because it is not yet possible to quantify, by any process or concept, the mental state of a person at the moment of his death.

It is a reasonable scientific expectation that one day, in the future, neuroscience, which is already working tirelessly in this field, will present us with this quantification in cognizable scales and units. If this were to occur, we could say that the Buddha's millennial principle of rebirth corresponds to a proven mathematical formula that expresses a scientifically indisputable truth.

In the dimension of his time, Buddha did not create belief systems; he insistently sought to do science using reason.

From the text "What Buddhists Believe" by the venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera, I extract the following excerpt:

*"The Anatta doctrine of the Buddha is over 2500 years old. Today the thought current of the modern scientific world is flowing towards the Buddha's Teaching of Anatta or No-Soul. In the eyes of the modern scientists, man is merely a bundle of ever-changing sensations. Modern physicists say that the apparently solid universe is not, in reality, composed of solid substance at all, but actually a flux of energy. The modern physicist sees the whole universe as a process of transformation of various forces of which man is a mere part. The*

*Buddha was the first to realize this.* "(In <https://www.budsas.org/ebud/whatbudbeliev/115.htm>)

The third question asks that if the Buddha said that life is eternal and spoke about "several successive lives, he could not deny the individual's life's eternity.

`Yes, he could. The concept of the eternity of life, Samsara, is a cosmological concept, not an anthropocentric one. The Buddha is not talking about people but universal energetic processes. The "various lives" he refers to are not relative to any individual's identity but to the constant recycling of the energies emanating from him, which are transformed by participating in other life forms.

When the individual in question was born, he did not receive a newly produced charge of new energy to constitute his mental states. He received from nature an energetic aggregate of components as old as the universe, recycled countless times, through numerous life forms, just like the carbon molecules in his fingernails, which may have been in the teeth of Napoleon's dog.

In its death: everything is transformed to be born again because even physics states that energy, like matter, is never destroyed; it is only transformed.

Finally, the fourth question addresses the Buddha's talk about heaven and hell. These concepts are very relativized in Buddhism and have no similarity with the Western models

*The hunger of desire is the worst of diseases; personal existence is the worst of sufferings. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 203)*

that see both as places, ambits, or dimensions where the individual who died will find extreme happiness or endless misfortune. In the Western tradition, both are scenarios resulting from a reward/punishment dialectical process, usually based on religious moral codes and other deontological ethical systems.

Western traditions. Moreover, the individual and his identity do not survive the death of his body, for, In Buddhism, there are no such concepts of punishment or reward to build the heavens and hells of our souls. No souls can go anywhere or dimension to receive rewards or be subjected to eternal torture for the gods' wrath and their inability to forgive the wretched humans.

The individual disappears with death, says Buddha. Why then do you speak of heavens?

He does not talk about these heavens of ours. The concepts of heavens and hells are **strictly cosmological in nature** and absolutely do not refer to individuals.

According to Buddha, the immeasurable universal context, where the process of life takes place, is formed by overlapping layers, by layers that are differentiated by the quality of the energies they contain. Like liquids of various densities in a container, these energy layers are differentiated according to their density in the case of our container and according to their intrinsic qualities in

*The good people shine from afar, like the peaks of the Himalayas. The wicked, like arrows shot in the night, vanish without being seen. The Buddha (Dhammapada, verse 304)*

Buddhist thought. As there is denser and less dense matter, there is also more subtle and elaborate energy and less subtle and coarser energy. The energy and the mental state that drives one warrior are not the same as those that inspired Chopin to compose his Nocturne.

It happens that (and modern physics has already expressed itself about this), similar energies attract, and different ones repel. The **principle of attraction and repulsion of energies** is ostensibly visible in electrostatic physics; less visible in other energy contexts, and never denied in any energy system, even if it is imperceptible to the senses or to the devices we have at our disposal.

Within this conception, Buddha states that beings inhabit different layers of the cosmic process of life and its evolution, according to their energies' nature and qualities, and that they attract and repel each other according to their differences.

Each layer of the cosmic life process houses and receives energetically compatible and corresponding beings and life forms. Each of these layers constitutes the world for the beings occupying it, which is not mixed with the other realms in which other beings live. This concept is not physical, spatial, or material; it is energetic: one's world is what one perceives, thinks, interprets, feels, and does.

The result is that life is arranged in levels of energetic quality. The highest levels are occupied by beings of more complex structure and more elaborate, experienced, and elevated energetic content, bearers of harmony, love and peace, generosity and compassion, selflessness and solidarity, growth and knowledge, and detachment the self. **These are the heavens**, where the higher beings dwell.

The lowest levels are occupied by beings still dominated by violence and hatred, by ignorance and their still primitive instincts, by lust and blind individualism. **These are the hells,** the layer where bestial beings live.

Neither of them is a place; they are energetic levels or vibrational atmospheres (mental states, in terms of modern neuropsychology) where each individual's mind is situated according to its quality or density. One doesn't die to get to heaven and hell: we already live in them since they are the product of our lives (feelings, actions, emotions, thoughts, etc.) and of our minds, which are responsible for their content.

By force of the physical law of attraction like energies, this energetic environment is an aggregator of like minds that interrelate with life itself. In this way, we carry in our minds the world of suffering or true joy that we have created; we drag with us on our path the heavens and hells to which we have decided to belong. And there is nothing more deserving than the heavens or hells we have built.

Thus, we can say that there are several different worlds and that the violent warrior and Chopin do not inhabit the same one.

What Buddhist thought teaches is that the elements of the impermanent aggregate of the individual's mental state, after his death and extinction of his identity, continue to exist according to the principle of conservation of energy and that by the principle of attraction and repulsion they will integrate one of these worlds: the one with which they most resemble.

In the endless wheel of life, the Samsara, and according to the existential quality of life lived by each individual, at each rebirth, his energies will be aggregated to more or less

evolved beings and will continue to exist in the world corresponding to his qualities, and may be improved or corrupted, evolve or regress.

Since the meaning of the wheel of life is to reach enlightenment, the top of all worlds (where everything is stabilized), each person's impermanent aggregate will be successively reborn after each death, transforming and aggregating with other beings, moving from the lower worlds to the higher ones, even if they have to pass through the path of thousands, millions of lives to do so.

The Anatta doctrine's entire complex content has become over time, and the diversifications of Buddhism a terrain of tumultuous discussions, disagreements, interpretations, and emerging or opposing sub doctrines.

Here is an interesting fact about the Buddha: he did not give any doctrinal importance to the existence or non-existence of the soul, and he did not even answer his disciples' questions about it.

From the same text of the venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera, quoted above, I extract the following passage:

***"Buddha considered the speculation of the soul useless and illusory.*** Based on several of Siddhartha's speeches, the Buddhist doctrine indicates that only through ignorance and delusion do men indulge in the dream that their souls are separate, self-existent entities. Their hearts still cling to the Self. They are preoccupied with heaven and seek the pleasure of the Self in heaven. Thus, they cannot see the bliss of righteousness and the immortality of truth. ' Selfish ideas appear in man's mind because he conceives of the Self and longing for existence.' (Source: Buddhist Study and Practice Group, <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/> )

It wasn't about disdain or anything like that. It was about respect for people. Siddhartha knew perfectly well that these concepts were precisely the ones that people clung to the most because of the immense fear they carried of non-existence, of death, of the extinction of identity, of the self.

The Buddha knew that the more people got involved with this endless discussion, the less they would be willing and open to learn his doctrine as a whole and to work and concentrate on improving their lives. He never imposed beliefs, whatever they might be, on anyone, let alone accepted that he was offending anyone's belief. On the other hand, he could not fail to state such an essential point of his doctrine and teachings. Thus, besides the fact that the Buddha expounded his doctrine of Anatta, he understood very empathetically the immense difficulty many people would have in accepting it, as well as the useless suffering they would undergo if they had to discuss or abandon their consoling beliefs.

Just as Siddhartha rejected any dogma as a violating belief imposed by some form of domination, he neither created nor set any belief. He only taught his doctrine and recommended that everyone never accept as accurate anything he said, simply because he was the one who said it. He suggested that they only accept what really made sense to each of them after a serene and deep reflection.

*Evil is done only through the self. Only through the self is one demeaned. The practice of evil is abandoned only through the self; only through the self is someone purified. Purity and impurity belong to the self. No man can purify another. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 165)*



In addition to understanding that this speculation was useless and illusory, Buddha also used what later came to be formulated by Blaise Pascal (1623 - 1662) known in Enlightenment philosophy as "the pragmatic argument. This argument asserted that people could do no harm by believing in the eternal soul, even if it did not exist, but could harm if they did not believe and the soul existed.

Buddha thought the same, with the grandeur of his consciousness.

*Better than a man who wins battles a thousand times a thousand men is he who wins himself. He is, in fact, the greatest of warriors. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 103*

## The Four Noble Truths

They constitute the set of teachings as they were expounded and whose themes come to be seen no longer in the cosmological and ontological context in which they were formulated but as the experiential reality of human beings,

**The first truth** is the statement that suffering is of the essence of human life. Life is a process that develops in the midst of suffering.

This statement's content has already been exposed to us by the words of the Buddha himself in the text of the Saccavibhanga Sutta, on pages 33 to 35.

**The second truth** states that the causes of suffering are internal to the individual and created or maintained by him, not something that arises from factors, causes or external circumstances. Buddhism holds each individual responsible for his particular suffering and declares that only he can reduce it. Suffering is not an external evil that victimizes man as if he were not the protagonist of his pain.

*Be free from the future; be free from the past; cross over to the other shore. With an entirely free mind, you will not fall into birth and death. The Buddha (Dhammapada, v.348)*

Alongside this fantasy of victimhood, ignorance of or ignorance about the causes of suffering prevents it from being removed. Combined with ignorance of the true meaning of life and the actual reality about oneself, this ignorance of the process of suffering also stimulates several factors that increase and aggravate suffering, such as attachment to the illusion of the self, selfishness, and blindness to one's shortcomings.

The **third truth** The reduction of suffering is possible through the rational understanding of reality and its causes. All suffering is a process that starts from a cognizable cause, and its discovery and understanding establish a process capable of reducing it intensely and leading the individual to a life of balance and harmony. Truth and reality are the same things.

This process of eliminating suffering, however, requires a process. Buddhism proposes this process in a model composed of 8 attitudinal paths and gives it the name "**Noble Eightfold Path**," "Middle Way," or simply **Dharma**.

**The fourth truth.** The path to the end of suffering (Dharma) is the individual process that each person can follow in his or her life towards the reduction of suffering and the attainment of joy and happiness, and enlightenment. The Dharma is the last of the four noble truths and, at the same time, the Second Jewel of Tiratana.

For methodological reasons, and following Tiratana, we will study the **Dharma** and its Eightfold **Path** in another Chapter, given the extension of its content, and because it concentrates all the leading practices and attitudinal contents of Buddhism.

## The Context and Structure of the Teachings

As we have seen, the fundamentals constitute the association of the elements of a worldview founded on rational realism, in constant evolutionary transformation, and of a humanism that is structured on the relativity of the individual's existence to all of his external reality. Man is a relative being.



*Buddha's footprints  
symbol of the middle way*

Buddhism is an evolutionary doctrine that denies any value to the human individual and its content, as a self of isolated existence, denies, furthermore, the existence of a transcendental deity, absolute and creative, as well as of an eternal individual soul, affirming the identity between truth and cognizable and

mutable reality, and rejecting any fundamental or dogmatic idea (this repulsion to absolute and immutable statements is applied by the Buddhist movement even concerning its own foundations).

The Buddhist worldview despises any metaphysical foundation and any established belief, taking them for mere illusions that are undemonstrable and impossible to achieve an experiential expression of reality and, therefore, of truth.

The context in which the Buddha presented these principles was not receptive: a society dominated millennia by Vedic culture and all its traditional polytheistic religions like Brahmanism (and all the components of what we call "Hinduism"). This context had an elitist nature and autocratic and discriminatory politics based on domination, violence, subjugating beliefs, and maintaining ignorance to sustain power.

From the frontal and intense clash between the advent of Buddhism and the dominant religious, polytheistic, Vedic culture, one could not expect the survival of these new ideas, and even of their proponents, were it not for the noble origins of Siddhartha and his admirable ability and organizational capacity to constitute the first Buddhist nuclei. This structuring was done so that society's cores could be accepted and seen as social groups noble for their quest for knowledge and harmless for their principle of nonviolence and disinterest in material goods.

Although they brought together the most different castes, genders, cultures, and cultural levels, without any discrimination whatsoever (which was not accepted by the culture of that time), Siddhartha managed to make sure that these groups were not seen as a threat or something despicable. He also managed to involve the traditional and dominant society in the material assistance to his followers (such as providing food and other aid), as they lived a life of seclusion and no longer had any income of any kind.

This context supports a) A revolutionary educational model that affirms the essential need for advanced education in general sciences, ethics, and behavioral sciences (wisdom, ethics, and mind control), which are considered indispensable to every individual's life. b) A behavioral model based on ethics, of simple and practical values and precepts, where compassion, solidarity, love, kindness, and detachment emerge as its virtues. c) An associative relational model between individuals in common purposes and cultural groups suitable for their development. d) An economic-social vision characterized by empathy, harmony, and collaboration among individuals, based on peace and the absence of any form of violence, where conflicts are solved through reason, participation, and consensus, always prevailing the common good. e) A strongly preservationist environmental policy, founded on the broadest respect for life, in any of its forms. f) A model of governmental policy based on. knowledge, in reality, in freedom, in equity, and full representation

All of these models are integrationist, to embrace all cultures, backgrounds, genders, and social and economic classes, without any exception or discrimination.

*The evil that is done by the self, born of the self and produced by the self, crushes the fool in the same way that the diamond breaks a hard precious stone. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse161)*

## The second Jewel

### (The Dharma)

### Constructive Existentialism

More than a practice or a script, the Eightfold Path is the development of thought that in specific points recalls Sartrean existentialism, in the sense that it is based on the



*The Dharma Wheel*

assertion that man is not born with any pre-existing baggage, essence, stigma, mission, destiny, or restriction. Man is born, pure and simple, as the fruit of nature in its evolutionary process, and is born endowed with all the necessary resources to live and grow. Thus, he is responsible for himself and for all that he will

be because he can evaluate, decide, and choose what will contain each instant of his life. Man is the sole builder of his existence, and his work can either be admirable or a disaster. Man is the builder of his own essence, the builder of his life and mind because everything derives from his experience. Everything depends on him, only on him.

It is because of these characteristics that I call Dharma "constructive existentialism".

Life is not a challenge, nor a prize or punishment: life **is just an opportunity**.

The Dharma offers eight attitudinal paths that can facilitate one's path through life so that this opportunity is not lost or wasted.

In its presentation, it is a script, an indicative guide. However, its content constitutes a complex and admirable behavioral system that uses interrelated cognitive processes and psychodynamic, ethical, and social nature elements. Its continued practice leads to the development of balance and harmony, which are the path to enlightenment.

The Dharma is called the "Middle Way" because Buddha designed it to have this purpose.

The search for enlightenment, not only in Siddhartha Gautama's life but also in the first Buddhist communities, was the monastic activity's nature. It was initially restricted to bhikkhus (the same as monks) who dedicated themselves entirely to it with their practices and studies. Consequently, these practices tended to be taken to extremes, which ended up creating a distortion that contradicted the very foundation and purpose of the search for enlightenment. Buddha himself, in his lifetime, experienced periods of

extremism concerning certain practices such as fasting, the limits of meditation, and isolation, among others. In this way, he could understand that the path to enlightenment must be moderate, natural, and compatible with people's diversified lives, even because his doctrine was not built for all men and not only for monks.



Siddhartha then wanted to propose moderate (middle) paths so that the practice of his doctrine would not become a burden or a disease, but a pleasant and joyful way of life, and he gave the "Middle Way" eight routes that constitute the spokes of a wheel: "The Wheel of Dharma."

In the texts left by the Buddha, the presentation of the Dharma is quite succinct, like a list of short statements. This conciseness makes it partly difficult to interpret and leads us to supplementary or explanatory texts for further understanding. Perhaps this is why most writers try to add commentaries and explanatory interpretations to the canonical text. In truth, they end up adding nothing and run the risk of becoming banal texts. I believe that there is no one better able to define each of the eight paths than its author, Siddhartha Gautama, in his own words:

*By walking this Path, you will end your suffering. I showed you this Way when I realized how the thorns must be removed from the body. The Buddha (Dhammapada, ver. 275)*

## *THE EIGHTFOLD PATH*

### *Mahāsatīpatthana Sutta (D22)*

*“And what is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right*

view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

And what is *right view*? Knowledge with reference to stress, knowledge with reference to the origination of stress, knowledge with reference to the cessation of stress, knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

And what is *right resolve*? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for freedom from ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

And what is *right speech*? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

And what is *right action*? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

And what is *right livelihood*? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

And what is *right effort*? There is the case where a monk generates desire,

*endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.*

*And what is **right mindfulness**? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.*

*And what is **right concentration**? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness*

*free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.*

*This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.*

*In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world.*

*This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths. »*

(Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu dhammatalks.org. Retrieved from <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/DN/DN22.html>. On Mar.12, 2021)

The eight paths of Dharma are not alternative; they form an inseparable set, where the absence of one of the routes makes the wholly impossible.

*The idle man who does not exert himself when he should, who although still young and strong is full of laziness, with a mind full of vain thoughts - such an indolent man cannot find the path to wisdom. The Buddha (Dhammapada verse 280*

## 5

## The third jewel (The Sangha)

### The essential association

Buddhism is a movement, a social and behavioral humanist action, besides being a doctrine. In this doctrine, there is no place for isolation or any form of individualism or egocentrism. Everything is centered on the interrelations between things and beings.

Even monks with an extremely monastic life live and do everything for the sake of the community, from the one in which they retreat for their studies and practices, to the society as a whole, in all its aspects, with which they maintain an essential bond.

Since there is no sense of individuality in Buddhism, the doctrine only exists within an existential associative. The doctrine does not exist in itself, but only in its existence and manifestation among people.

Therefore, Buddha directed his teachings and practices to small communities that housed anyone who wanted to join his activities from the very beginning. They were called Sanghas.

They were resident communities. People started living in a shared environment and under the same circumstances and conditions, dedicating themselves to their studies, experiences, and practices, including mainly meditation and assistance to those who sought any kind of help there.

Sanghas had some identifying marks through which they were known by society: a) they rejected any kind of violence or competition; b) they were composed of people who had detached themselves from social and economic powers; they became poor and anonymous; c) they welcomed anyone to join them without any distinction of origin or caste, gender, culture, belief, race, age, or social or cultural condition, as long as they proposed to follow their principles and practices.

Thus, the sanghas became known as "the mendicant communities" in that their members did not work for money and had divested themselves of their possessions. To feed themselves, they asked for a little food from the inhabitants of the towns and cities, which was given to them by the friendly and truthful image of people who acquired increasing knowledge by their untiring studies, who were willing to receive anyone

In this interrelationship with society as a whole, the Sanghas had a stringent rule regarding food: they ate only once a day and only in quantities necessary for their bodily needs. Given this interrelation with society as a whole, the Sanghas had a stringent rule regarding food: they ate only once a

*Death carries away the human being whose mind is devoted to picking the senses' flowers, just as a heavy flood carries away a sleeping village—the Buddha (Dhammapada verse 47).*

day and only in quantities necessary for their bodily needs. It was a way of paying respect to the cities' support by providing them with food that, in return, could not be lost through gluttony or the simple pleasure of eating.

In this delicate context, the Sanghas managed to be well regarded and accepted by society. However, they were home to the most diverse castes, women on parity with men (everything that was not received by the Brahmin culture, where the chaste inferiors were outcasts, and women slaves), believers of any belief or non-believers of anything, coming from anywhere, thinking whatever they thought. They were, from their seeds, **universalist communities**.

With all these aspects, they were seen by the dominant society as harmless, non-competitive, and pacifist, helpful in some pragmatic aspect for the scientific and philosophical knowledge they developed, accumulated, and shared with society.

Because of these functions and capabilities, the Sanghas have always been an essential factor to the very existence of the doctrine, which is why it is defined as one of the three jewels of Buddhism: the third gem of Tiratana. Despite the differences in the varieties of Buddhism, there are always the same three cornerstones that are called the Three Jewels.

*What is the importance of the shape of your hair, O fool?  
What is the significance of your elegant clothes? You clean  
yourself on the outside, and inside you there is desire,  
suffering, and resentment. The Buddha (Dhammapada,  
ver.394)*



These are the Buddha, the Dharma, the Buddha's teaching, and the Sangha, the community that follows the teachings.

When a person accepts the Buddhist philosophy and wishes to make it part of his life, the traditional way is to say, "I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Sangha.

The Dharma, the Buddha's teaching, is based on the Four Noble Truths and is symbolized by the wheel. Initially, the Sangha was a monastic community and would later include all those who followed the Buddhist path.

The first jewel is the Buddha. Taking refuge in the Buddha is not hiding in the safety of a powerful being. Taking refuge in this situation is more like shifting to a new perspective, to a new awareness of possibility within all of us. By taking refuge in the Buddha, we align ourselves with the ability to become a Buddha, to seek the ability to be awakened to what the Buddha experienced. This precious jewel reminds us to find our own Buddha-nature.

Dharma is the path that follows the teachings of the Buddha and ultimately leads to awakening. Dharma teaches us to have compassion for ourselves and others through understanding the Four Noble Truths and leads to liberation from fear and ignorance. The path involves embracing the Buddha's teachings and applying this understanding to everyday life. The Dharma is called the second jewel.

The Sangha comprises those who gather in groups of any size to study, discuss, practice meditation with the desire to help and be helped by that group. The Buddha saw that interaction with other people who are on the path is essential to practice. He saw this as necessary for ordained monks as well as those in the community at large. The Sangha is the third precious jewel.

In the original teaching and even in present-day Theravada communities, the Sangha refers only to monks, nuns, and other ordained teachers. However, the concept of Sangha is more broadly and modernly interpreted in many Mahayana and Western groups to include all those who embrace the Dharma as a community, regardless of its shape or size.

With the current technological resources, which have radically changed the ways and possibilities of communication and relationships between people, there are countless digital Sanghas on virtual platforms. The interrelationship and interaction among its members occur at a distance but with the same meaning and intensity.

By their very nature, the Sanghas gradually became important cultural centers. What we might call "Enlightenment" and "evolutionary" people of the time came to see them for what they were: **the first universities on the planet**, forerunners of most of the physical sciences and humanities where, among much else, political sociology, ethics, and philosophy of mind experienced their first breaths.

Early Buddhism's importance and influence in the entire educational structure and process in Eurasia has been and continues to be a remarkable phenomenon.

The so-called "**higher learning**" was an educational model that emerged in the Sanghas due to Buddhist doctrine itself, which understood that knowledge was essential for attaining enlightenment and a necessary part of the Dharma. Ignorance has always been repugnant to Buddhism. Ignorance being one of the most prevalent causes of suffering and existential failure in human life, the Sanghas

had as one of their purposes to develop and offer higher learning to society.

The central idea was to develop advanced multidisciplinary knowledge anchored in developing wisdom in the Buddha's teachings. The initial form established a comprehensive and diverse curriculum, aggregated into three centers: rational understanding of the **sciences, knowledge, the** practice of **ethics**, and the mind's knowledge and command.

Enlightenment is only achieved by people who consistently master these three areas in their lives. It is no use a lying scientist, an ignorant saint, or a sincere scholar who does not know and guide his own mind.

From these three centers, the first Buddhist schools developed a very advanced and demanding curriculum, which established an educational model that influenced the entire Eurasian culture for many centuries and determined its people's cultural identity.

This educational model's study is pervasive, exhaustive: it does not fit in this paper and should be developed separately 'by interested individuals.

**Advanced rational knowledge, knowledge of ethics and its practice, knowledge, and command of the mind** were the core of these communities 2,500 years ago, precisely as they are today, in all their versions and diversities.

No educational model known to history comes close to the content, level of knowledge, territorial spectrum of influence, penetration, cultural sedimentation, development, and survival time achieved by early Buddhism schools.

## The Practices

All Buddhist practices have a monastic origin and were initiated in the Sanghas. As Buddhism spread, it adapted to the cultures and environments with which they interacted, acquiring a very diverse relativism.

Within the reclusive monastic environment and practiced by people dedicated to full-time doctrine, it is natural that they would tend toward ritualism, bodily expression, and also symbolic and iconic expression.

Especially for us Westerners, the outward appearance of these practices and rites seems rather exotic, and with their complex perceived semiotics, we cannot relate them to objective reality.

Our biases, beliefs, and pragmatic simplifications also contribute to this.

For our western culture, Buddhist practices look like something in principle beautiful and possibly immaterial, but very strange, without any rational content that we can perceive and of an unattainable meaning for our cultures, where sounds and words of languages impossible to be spoken mix with movements not known to be of joy or fear. One more among our many, many idiosyncrasies is born.

From their origins to their adaptations to many different cultures, studying these practices requires the digestion of gigantic indigestible libraries without bringing us any valuable results or substantial knowledge.

Whenever we encounter the indecipherable unknown at first contact, we tend to develop cognitive dysfunctions in search of an answer that will take away the anguish of this

confrontation between our mind and what it cannot interpret. In these ways, we abandon all simple and realistic understandings and embrace volatile fantasies.

So the correct cognitive path is to ask, "What, after all, does it all mean?" The answer is as simple as the question: this is all just a ritualized set of practices, thoughts, and deeds that monks use to walk the Dharma, one's eight-route existential path correctly. Nothing more.

Certainly, there are thousands of specific rituals and practices, but most of what we see and cause strangeness are "**pujas**" that are nothing more than acts and gestures that help monks overcome their sufferings: exactly the purpose of Dharma. The most common pujas are:

**Mantras** -pronounce specific sounds or chant short musical phrases repeatedly. The mantras facilitate meditation because as you concentrate on a repetitive sound, your mind is emptied of any ideas with which it is involved. It's a preparatory mental cleansing for meditation

**Chanting**:-singing the canonical texts. It is precisely the same as Gregorian chanting in Christian ceremonies, or what the muezzins do from the top of the minarets chanting passages from the Koran, or the rabbis in the liturgical chanting of the Torah.

**Curvatures of** the torso and head are a part of the practices, meaning manifestation of respect and adherence, just as in Western traditions.

**Offerings**: Gratitude is expressed with offerings to the Buddha, usually of fruit and flowers.

None of these monastic practices have much importance outside a monastery, in the same form that a Christian does

not consider going out on the streets whistling or humming Gregorian chants.

The truth is that Buddhists do the same things inside and outside the monasteries' walls: everything they can do to walk the eight routes of the Dharma. Buddhists **never** leave this triangle: doctrine (Buddha), the Dharma routes, the community (Sangha).

Hence, it follows that you can do all of this without having to do any of that. You can adopt all the practices within your reach and of your choice to walk your path, whether you have your head shaved in a monastery or wear shorts and Havaianas sandals with your hair blowing in the wind on the beach.

What matters are the contents and not the symbolism or appearances. Siddhartha Gautama did not develop a doctrine for monks but for humans, all of them.

There is, however, one practice that is essential to Buddhism; it is a **condition** without which no one can walk the Eightfold Path: meditation. **Meditation is the only true liturgy of Buddhism.**

If you could ask the Buddha, "Should I meditate every day? He would say, "No! All day long."

Meditation does not depend on temples, ceremonies, or rites; it is meant to be part of your mind, consciousness, life flow, body, and psyche.

You can meditate in a thousand ways and a thousand situations because meditation is not an externalized act; it takes place in a state of mind of your own. You can meditate either in a beautiful, silent field of flowers with butterflies fluttering in the air, in lotus posture and wearing an earth-colored rakusu or in the crowded carriage of the 11 o'clock

train, the last one until tomorrow morning, with a sweaty jacket and a tight shirt collar, carrying the rest of the day's lunch in your lap.

Is Buddhist meditation something pleasant? Not, and absolutely yes. The effects and results of meditation are intensely pleasurable, but the process of meditation itself can even be painful; harrowing.

When several authors claim that Buddha was the precursor of psychoanalysis, they realized that Buddhist meditation is undeniably a psychoanalytic process. In a meditational exercise, you observe your mind as being external to it, rationally and critically, as well as analytically in the sense of cognitively getting as close as possible to the origins, causes, and processes forming and maintaining your mental states. If we could discuss these statements at a round table with Buddha, Freud, and Lacan, we would undoubtedly have a complete unanimity.

This whole process involves numerous cognitive, emotional, and organic components, besides the most varied brain and mental states, of which today we have a broader knowledge due to neuroscience, especially neuropsychology.

What makes it all that much more complex is that meditation is not like a cake recipe or a digital app tutorial. That is, no matter how much you might wish it, and how much you might have a detailed step-by-step guide and the necessary equipment, you couldn't start meditating tomorrow morning. Meditation is a skill that imposes learning, dedication, attention, practice, development, and incorporation to a point where you can realize that there is no "meditation"; there is "your meditation."

Fitness for Buddhist meditation requires months, years of effort; in some cases, it requires lifetimes.

Whenever I analyze this challenge that meditation imposes, a figuration occurs in my mind. I am illiterate in music. A musical score and a scroll in Malay are to me the same thing: they say absolutely nothing. Then someone comes along whom I trust a lot and says, "Here is a piano. It's new; all that's left is to tune it. Here is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; it contains all the notes, chords, tempos, etc. I challenge you to play it perfectly. I decide to accept the challenge, and after 15 years of dedication, difficulties, successes, and failures, I manage to overcome the challenge. I then call the person and carefully play the symphony for him to hear. After listening, she says, "Great, congratulations. Now you can accept my challenge. "Challenge, what do you mean?" I ask. "Yes, challenge," says the person, "It doesn't matter if you can perform the Ninth Symphony. Everyone can do it. There is no "perfection" in it. While being able to perform it is fundamental to your being able to do what I want you to do, "perfection" means:: composing a better symphony than Beethoven's Ninth: your symphony, the one that no one but you can compose."

Buddha left us the "score of the Ninth Symphony," or the step-by-step tutorial" of meditation. Given the complexity and depth of the meditation process, this is a lengthy document, despite the admirable conciseness with which Buddha spoke. This document is popularly known as "The Long Discourse on Mindfulness and Meditation," and its canonical title is Mahasatipatthana Sutta, and its full text is in Appendix 2.

Any Buddhist will suggest that you read this text "little by little," where "little by little" does not refer to a specific chronological rhythm. The expression means: as you



understand and progressively incorporate and experience what you have understood. Time does not matter; it is not a measure here.

I'm sure that it is difficult for a Buddhist to say precisely when he started to truly meditate because it doesn't happen in a moment but is a process that develops, often over a lifetime. What matters, however, is to begin because inability, like ignorance, does not have a beginning but has an end.

It is fundamental to know that Buddhist meditation has two basic concepts that usually blend into any meditation practice: **Samatha meditation** and **Vipassana meditation**.

The first, known as gentle meditation, aims to lead the meditator to the most profound possible concentration. It is how one tries to empty the mind, completely removing the consciousness of any facts that occur or that one imagines could happen and the corresponding emotions. The emptying of the mind means that at that moment, it does not contain the representation of any object or idea. The mind is free from the past, the future, and the self.

Samatha is an initial step to meditation because meditation would be impossible with the mind attentive to any stimulus, idea, or object. Meditation is written on a blank page: an empty mind.

It sounds easy, but it is not. A monk can clear his mind in the middle of the crowd at a soccer field. The ordinary mortals often spend an entire night, or even days, with a stupid idea hammering in our minds.

Emptying the mind is as complex as the case with the piano: "It's new; it just needs tuning. Many people are naïve when the easy solution occurs to them: "It's simple; if I stop thinking about what I'm thinking about, all I have to do is think about

something else," and in this way, they think they are emptying their mind while filling it with something else.

Even for a few minutes, thinking about nothing is a skill acquired by continuous and often lengthy training.

Many techniques are suggested for this, the most commonly used being the one that tries to keep your attention strictly attentive to your breathing, to the movements of the diaphragm, to the timing of inhalation and exhalation, to how your heart rhythm accompanies the flow of air, to the slower and deeper rhythm it acquires. Your breath is not an object, nor an existing idea occupying your mind. It is a physical and energetic process that you can perceive and observe as a spectator. If you keep a careful concentration on your breathing, after a few minutes, your mind will naturally become empty and become the blank page on which you can write your score.

The quality of "emptiness" has great prominence in the doctrine. Reality is empty because it exists in uninterrupted transformation, and at every slightest instant, it can assume entirely different contents. Nothing remains. The "self" is empty because it is volatile and determined by mental states that we incessantly produce and modify. The "self," or the identity, is empty; it contains nothing that is, that persists. Both external and internal reality are nothing; they **are** only tiny particles of what we call "time."

Samatha is the meditation of emptiness.

Vipassana meditation is the second stage that starts from a rigorously emptied mind. It is also called the reflective level, in which the meditator will go through four processes of observation and will be able to use all his cognitive, analytical, and critical capacity in forming knowledge of his present reality and understanding of himself.—knowing

reality and knowing oneself. In understanding reality, the meditator must free himself entirely from what we call the past and the future. Buddhism insists that only the present is part of reality; past and future do not exist. The past dies, just as the individual's identity dies in each instant, and is recomposed in the next moment: the present. The future does not exist; it is an imaginary projection of our minds; it is not part of reality and cannot be rationally and critically analyzed. The future is the great garbage can of what is worst in us: we throw into it all our fears, our unsatisfied desires, our repressed rages, obsessions, our selfishness, our torn hopes, and all the fragments of our vanity and guilt. The future is our hell, the one we build for ourselves and with which we punish and flog ourselves throughout our lives.

For Buddhism, attachment to the past is an obsession, and attachment to the future a delusion.

It is thus naked that the meditator's consciousness begins its Vipassana. Stripped of the past and the future, stripped of itself, freed from the narcissistic illusion of the "self" as a separate being, and open to the reality of being related to all that exists.

The silence of Samatha is diluted by the intensity of the activity of Vipassana.

At this stage, the meditator will carry out the four successive observation processes: observing the **body**, the observation of **feeling**, the observance of the **mind**, and the observation of **principles** (qualities). Vipassana actually constitutes a cognitive and psychoanalytic process of the external reality and his internal fact expressed in his brain and mental states in the present.

Vipassana makes it clear, by requiring the observation of principles, that knowledge of oneself is only complete when

the meditator undertakes an in-depth critical evaluation of his or her behavior as to its ethical content. Knowledge of the body, the psyche, the mind, and morality.

By saying before that Buddhist meditation is painful in its procedure, I referred to Vipassana.

Here, the purpose of meditation is strictly tied to the four noble truths. I am suffering; my mind constructs the suffering, I can overcome the suffering, I have a path to follow.

To know, evaluate and criticize the reality surrounding you, search in the present for the external and internal causes of all your sufferings. However deep they may be, stripped of any defense of your "self," to question your actions' ethical value in the face of suffering and realistically evaluate how it can be improved or eliminated is not a pleasant process.

Situating his experience in **the present** is even less pleasant. Let's say that the meditator is very distressed because he has been offended by someone. He can evaluate it like this: "I am distressed because **of a trauma that I have** carried since childhood because my father mistreated me in front of my brothers. Reasoning like this is useless in the meditative process; it is only an attitude of escape. Your possible trauma belongs to the past, and the past no longer exists, no longer integrates reality. It is not the past that constructs today; it is built by his mind, here and now, and if he duly observes reality today, here and now, he will only say: **"I am angry with the one who offended me, and I am the only one responsible for my anger.**

At this moment, he will have known the true cause of his suffering: his anger, and from this, he will be able to develop his ways of freeing himself from this destructive feeling.

However, the results that meditation achieves are delightful and precious, much more than the momentary pleasure of a desire's satisfaction. What meditation offers that is broader and deeper are peace, the joy of being alive and intertwined with all that exists, liberation from useless suffering, cleansing from stored poisons, gentleness, compassion, empathy, the nakedness of the mind, and the lightness of walking each step without the imaginary burdens of the past and the future, the release from the bonds of selfishness, knowing that your consciousness will die this instant because it is volatile like our mental states, but that it will be reborn the next moment, to continue on the same path.

Meditation is the locomotive that gives motion to the Eightfold Path. If we look at the eight routes that make up the Dharma, we will see that they all depend on a process that leads to rational knowledge of current reality and the broadest and most profound understanding of oneself in terms of all that one's mind carries and one's ethical behavior practices.

According to its doctrine, Buddhist meditation leads the meditator to encounter the most substantial of all values: truth. Psychoanalysis, neuroscience, behavioral sciences, and current theories of value are very close to many points of the Buddhist meditative process, and their evidence increasingly proves the effectiveness of their methodology for the knowledge of the mind, the promotion of emotional balance, the improvement and expansion of cognitive processes, and the consolidation of consciousness. Hence its therapeutic value and the fact that it promotes intellectual development, emotional balance, and associative and relational capacity.

## The Karma

Karma is a term that has become commonplace in the West, and has come to mean a variety of things: some more or less close to the proper concept, although defective, others absurdly wrong.



*Endless knot - The Karma*

A canonical understanding of karma does not fit in this text, given its extent, nature, and purposes.

The concepts of karma predated Buddhism and were long rooted in Hindu and Vedic cultures and religions, acquiring their features in each of them, often coinciding or compatible, sometimes not.

Because of its long history and diversities, the term karma has taken on thousands of faces

potentiated into millions of concepts over time and seen by thousands of different eyes. To dive into this whole universe of ideas makes no sense.

Since among these thousands of different eyes, some more acute ones, such as the canonical records, the physical

sciences, psychology, and contemporary philosophy, we will try to trace an understanding of karma from the most basic and universalized concepts, incorporating the multidisciplinary contribution of several authors.

One way of looking at karma is to see it as a **reflex effect**, defined by the laws of physics and extended to the field of energies. In this sense, karma fits the principle that every action provokes an **equal and opposite** reaction. The evidence for this principle concerning masses is something already commonplace in elementary physics, and to the extent that one can quantify energies, it seems to prevail for them. Scientific evidence of this proposition is in electrostatic energy, where it is demonstrated that similar energies attract and opposite ones move away (positive charge x negative charge).

On the assumption that our consciousness and our actions and emotions arise from the reciprocal electro-neural interaction between brain states and mental states (as science has also demonstrated), it is admitted that our thoughts, our actions, and our emotions are generators of specific energies transmitted to the environment at the frequency in which our minds exist.

Once this occurs, an equal and opposite reaction, equally specific, will immediately be reflexively inflicted by the environment. Since these energetic emanations are unmistakable from each other due to their vibratory frequency and other quantum elements (which are still scientific hypotheses), they will attract each other **according to their nature**, and you will receive from the environment, in return, the same and as much of what you emitted.

The mental states that result from this process accumulate these energetic emissions and responses, like an electric

battery, and they concentrate in your mind progressively, as they are repeated. Thus, a conservation of energy occurs, as required by the laws of physics.

**Karma is precisely this specific accumulated energetic charge that each person carries in his or her mind.**

That is why karma is popularly called the "universal law of return," and the inferences we use originate expressions, also popular and generally intuitive, such as "each one carries the hell he does," "here you do, here you pay," "your anger turns against you," and so on.

So there is a tendency to see karma as a punishment, a corrective response from the universe, a kind of counter-current to be paid, and the like. Such a view is a misconception since our mental capacity to generate energies of type "A" for love, for example, is the same as our capacity to stimulate energies of type "O" for hate. Both will respond to equal intensity and nature, making it clear that karma itself is neither good nor bad. It only exists because energy is not lost. Good or bad are our thoughts, emotions, and actions, which we choose.

There are, therefore, no elements of guilt, condemnation, or gratification in the Buddhist concept of karma. There is the extensive concept of choice and responsibility. We are the product of our choices, and only by changing our choices can we change the energetic burden we carry. No violent person can expect to be stroked by other living beings, just as no one who truly strokes his fellow beings should expect a slap in response.

Leaving the energetic-physical reasoning and observing these same facts from the psychic and behavioral angle, several authors conceptualize karma as "**the law of moral causality**"; that is, ethics as behavior constitutes a



determining factor in the quality and nature of our mental states, that is, in the quality of lives.

The Buddha, however, delved more deeply into the concept of karma than understanding it from our actions. He used the term karma, explicitly referring to **volition, the intention or motive behind an action**. He said that karma is volition because it is the motivation behind the action determining the karmic fruit. Inherent in every purpose of the mind is energy powerful enough to produce subsequent results. When we understand that karma is based on volition, we can see the enormous responsibility we have to become aware of the intentions that precede our actions. If we are unaware of our minds' motives, when unskillful volitions arise, we can unconsciously act on them and thus create future suffering conditions.

The consequence of this Buddhist observation is that what we want matters more than what we do in terms of energy generation, which defines karma as a strictly moral phenomenon and reinforces the doctrine that requires deep knowledge of our emotions and complete command of the mind. This predominance in the importance of intention in karma resembles in part the concept of "sin" in Christianity, which can be committed "in thought, word, and deed. It is not necessary to kill; we are murderers from the moment we consciously desire to kill.

The doctrine of Karma goes on to question what happens to this "impermanent aggregate" after the individual's death. The traditional response of early Buddhism has always been the affirmation of the transmutation of energy. Once its aggregating core, which was the person's mental states while alive, is gone, this impermanent aggregate, which is an energetic structure, will be available and released (emanated) into nature. In that state, no longer integrated

into a specific energy system, it will be attracted by some other developing aggregating nucleus that is qualitatively and quantitatively compatible. By the nature of these energies, the new aggregating core will be a new life in the process of formation.

This meeting of the released impermanent aggregate with its new aggregating core is precisely the concept of "rebirth" that Buddha referred to: a new being, a new life, a new mind, aggregating experiences and energies generated by other beings in previous times.

Looking at the concept of Karma from this angle, one has (at least I have) the feeling that we are talking about the script of a fiction movie. However, I soon come back to reality and critical thinking when I remember that if, at this moment, Carl Jung were standing next to me, and I asked him what the **collective unconscious** is, he would probably give me the same description.

In your psyche and your mental states, you carry knowledge, learning, and experiences acquired since the beginning of the Paleolithic, 150,000 years ago, without ever having had a personal experience related to them. And what were the channels of transmission of these energies aggregated and dispersed so often in so many individuals? The name is the **human genome**.

Don't ever feel like a young man. Your consciousness enjoys, suffers, loves, and hates with everything new that inhabits it. Your unconscious, however, is older than the species because, even before we were hominids, we had already learned a lot from the primates in this endless dance of evolution.

Raul Seixas was wrong: he was not born 10,000 years ago. It was much, much earlier.

Being a concept that predates Buddhism, and being today pulverized by thousands of different currents, groups, sects, and trends, the principle of Karma is described in ways that range from fundamental theocentric beliefs to delirious fantasies, according to the popular imagination and pseudoscience.

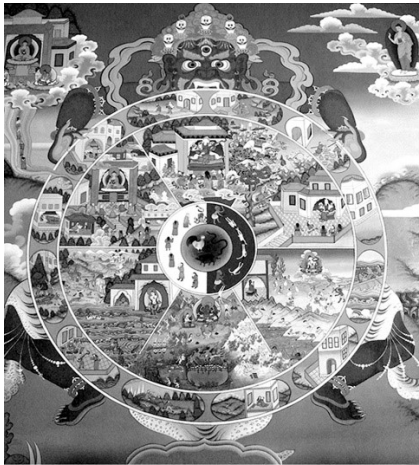
If we really want to understand the Buddhist principle of Karma, whether we accept it or not, we can only rely on two elements: the Pali canon and contemporary science.

## 8

## The Hierarchy of Beings, the Six Realms and the Divinization of Archetypes

Every worldview (the way we see and understand the universe, the world we live in, and ourselves) establishes a hierarchy among beings due to the phenomenon of inequality among individuals.

All philosophical and religious traditions present their definitions of this hierarchy, which is a way of proclaiming their worldview. In the figure below, we can see the hierarchy among beings conceived by Buddhism and that presented by Buddhism.



*Samsara - The Wheel of Life*  
Approx. 250 BC



*The Great Chain of Beings*  
*Retorica Christiana - 1579 AD*

In philosophy, there are only two ways to construct a hierarchy. I say construct because it is a rational construct:

1 - In the first mode, worldview (or cosmovision) starts from a pre-established Idea about the universe and, guided by the content of this idea, develops its conceptions of the universe, world and beings. By this way, one arrives (in our case of human beings) at an anthropovision, which is a necessary conceptualization for the construction of a value ordering among beings.'

This anthropovision will not be grounded on any empirical, experimental element, but

only in the ideal context pre-established by the worldview.

Such is the idealistic worldview.

2 - The second way of building a worldview takes the opposite path: one makes a rational worldview from empirical reality, and from there, evolves to a vision of the world and universe.

These are the realist worldviews.

History and science have shown that worldviews born out of (realist) anthropovisions can arrive at true or false constructs, depending on their origin and development. When their results are wrong, they have various epistemological resources for their correction, even if substantial.

In turn, idealistic worldviews invariably arrive at logically and anthropologically false results. Because they are wrong and undemonstrable, they express

themselves through dogmas, which are impediments imposed on critical thinking, making it impossible to expose it to science, adapt it, and develop it.

They become, therefore, opposing concepts, with no possibility of logical or hermeneutical reconciliation.

The aspects that most distinguish one from another are the following:

a) The essential foundation of one is determined by a pre-established system of ideas (ideology), unchanging and non-relative, which overrides any other epistemological context, and from which everything else follows. In contrast, the foundation of realist worldviews is born from an anthropovision subjected to experimental cognitive processes and knowledge criticism and adds content to formulate their observations of larger and more complex contexts, such as the world and the universe.

b) Starting from absolute ideological support, idealistic worldviews demand the existence of a deity central and superior to everything, ontologically able to construct and direct the universe and everything it contains, including man.

In realist worldviews, everything that exists is mutable and impermanent, including men, especially the universe itself. No creator god could have built this universe as it is. This god can only exist in the imagination of men.

b) In idealistic worldviews, all transcendental content is of a permanent, immortal nature. They will be there forever. Human individuals are immortal; gods and deities, angels, saints, cherubim, and demons are permanent, eternal. These

entities exist in these idealistic beliefs; they are not symbolic, metaphorical, or referential. They are beings outside us humans, with whom we relate.

In realist worldviews, everything that is transcendental is metaphorical, is symbolic, is archetypal, is dialectical.

c) Idealistic worldviews despise our genomic evolutionary process and the influence of our collective unconscious in the formation of human society and experience, including its ethics which, according to them, is dictated by god through revelations.

Realist worldviews, on the other hand, incorporate in their reality and their transcendence the whole human unconscious experience.

d) Idealistic worldviews start from a god who invented men, while realist worldviews start from men who sometimes like to create gods.

e) Both models of worldviews are essentially paradoxical: the idealist starts from a creator god and arrives at a man who does not need him, and the realists start from a man who walks to uncover the existence of the gods and discovers that he, man, does not exist.

In the images above, we see the divergent representation of the hierarchy of beings: on the left, the Buddhist scale, expressed by the Wheel of Life (Samsara), and on the right, the Great Chain of Beings, medieval Christian.

They are not only two different designs; they are two strictly opposite concepts.

In Western traditions, humans are considered permanent beings who god created, referred to as "in his image and likeness", with a pre-established destiny overseen by the

deity, who can intervene in it through what is called "divine providence" (a specific divine plan for each living human being), even by miraculous means. Beings are what god planned them to be, and people must accept these designs and destinies as the will of the deity.

The hierarchy of beings is, therefore, something of relatively indeterminate content. With an unchanging nature given to them and ruled by deities that are also unchanging, all men are equally insignificant. They were made "innocent and ignorant" and then corrupted by committing "original sin" by eating the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". In rational terms, this means that man lost his innocence by trying to put away his ignorance and know what good and evil are through his own existential experience. Being a deontological ethical model, it would not be up to man to do this because it was up to god alone to tell him what good and evil were. For this (his original sin), the man was punished with what has been called the "human condition." The "human condition" has for centuries been part of long, rhetorical, and inconclusive narratives, to say what Buddha said in one short sentence in his First Noble Truth: "Suffering is human nature.

Man, thus, having no participation in his ontogenesis, his hierarchization is quite simple, limited to placing him in a valued relationship with divinities and semi-divinities, all permanent, immutable, and immensely superior men.

One can perceive this conceptual simplicity in the graphic representation of the "Great Chain of Beings", from medieval Christianity, reproduced above.

In the Buddhist case, the hierarchization is much more complex since there is no such creative deity. Born from a natural and spontaneous evolutionary process of the



universe, men are the creators of their worlds and their own lives. They are destiny-less beings who carry the consciousness of their present experiences and the unawareness of their energetic heritages and the learning of the species recorded in the archetypes attached to the species' genome.

It is a being that is born neither innocent nor ignorant, and that has relevant participation in its ontogenesis. It is a being that builds itself in a universe where everything is transformed by every gesture, every thought, every action, and where nothing remains, not even the universe itself.

The hierarchization of this being on a cosmic scale becomes something extremely complex. '

Such complexity is what the figure of Samsara - the Buddhist Wheel of Life - seeks to show.

Samsara means the successive and incessant cycle of births and deaths and transformations, not of the individual, who is extinguished at death, but of his existential conscious energies, until this aggregate reaches its enlightenment, state in which it will break the circle of Samsara, becoming integrated into the immense cosmic aggregate of consciousness and making rebirth no longer occur. The goal is enlightenment, which means total harmony and complete and conscious cosmic integration.

The concept of enlightenment elects a man who is master of his destiny and participant in his ontogenesis and who is hierarchized not as he is, because he is in principle nothing, but as he is in his ways within this cycle. In the ambits and environments of the Samsara cycle, each one will choose with which behavioral and ethical characteristics he makes his evolutionary path, qualitatively enriching or impoverishing the energetic aggregate he carries. The Buddhist argument

elects a hierarchization of an ethical nature, not an ontological one.

To understand this universe of concepts, it is essential to always keep in mind that this Buddhist hierarchy comprises metaphors, symbolism, archetypal figures, and historical elements. Nothing in it is literal or objective; everything is figurative, well following the patterns of expression and communication of the Vedic and Hindi cultures. Instead of levels, the hierarchy uses the idea of "realms" or spheres where people live and in which their impermanent aggregates can be reborn, incorporated into the new life in formation, according to their qualities.

There are six kingdoms of beings according to Buddhism:

- The Kingdom of the Beings of Hell: Naraka/gati/Jigokudō.
- The Realm of Spirits/Hungry Ghosts: Preta-gati/Gakidō ...
- The Animal Kingdom: Tiryagyonigati/Chikushōdō ...
- The Realm of Human Beings: Manusyagati/Nindō
- The Realm of the Semi-Gods: Asuragati/Ashuradō
- The Divine Realm: Devagati/Tendō

Realms should be understood as "environments" in which human life can be present. They are not places but mental states resulting from the ethical and behavioral qualities of the person. The rebirth of any person can occur in any of these realms, even in the animal kingdom, because of this ethical foundation,

The hierarchy of beings in Buddhism is an ethical classification. The presence of mystical-magical expressions, the characterization of divinities and semi-divinities, the types of beings taken into consideration are figurations that

communicate ideas and not realities that can be observed. This hierarchization does not have a doctrinal structure but only a semiotic nature,

Keeping all these approaches in mind is necessary to make reading and understanding Samsara possible. As content, it adds nothing to Buddhist doctrine but synthesizes and interrelates all its primary elements.

It presents the Buddhist cosmology, with the hierarchy of beings, the poisons of the mind, the Dharma path, the six realms of existence, the function of Karma, the heavens and hells of our minds and lives, death, and rebirth as repetitive cycles. Samsara traps man in these cycles of life and death until he attains enlightenment, integrates with the truth, and frees himself from this cycle so that he no longer has to be born into the realm of the Human and die successively.

Suppose we translate its symbolic, cultural, historical references and aggregate meanings, the archetypes and values presented in the form of deities, the meaning of the colors, the referential animal elements, the geometric relations, and structures. In that case, we will extract from this figure absolutely everything that has been written in this book, and still much more that would remain to be written.

Samsara, the Wheel of Life, is one of the most interesting works of oriental graphics, not for its aesthetic, visual, or doctrinal value, but the immense capacity of expression of one of the most complex philosophical and ethical systems of humanism. With a small drawing, it turns entire libraries into dust as well as causes the impression of the impossible: "**seeing** Buddhism." in all its cultural diversity, dressed in all the nuances and popular beliefs, superstitions, and projections of the imaginary that have been added to it over the centuries, all the languages and symbols it has used to say

the same things to such different peoples, its dialects and semantics, its mysteries and realities.

By the way, we will not interpret in deep this figure in this text; we would have to write another book.

What we can do is transcribe a small explanatory index that at least allows us to contemplate it superficially. There are many such indexes, but the one I like best is the one available at [https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/1/7682/files/2014/10/Wheel\\_of\\_Life\\_02-1dnr9fe.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/1/7682/files/2014/10/Wheel_of_Life_02-1dnr9fe.pdf).

## Samsara, the Wheel of Life

### 1: The Wheel of Life: Samsara, Birth, Rebirth, Liberation.

Bhavachakra, or Samsara, is a Tibetan Buddhist representation of the "wheel of life" or cycle of existence.



The Wheel of Life (called Bhavachakra in Sanskrit) represents the cycle of birth and rebirth and existence in Samsara

The wheel has different parts and explains what each one means. The main sections are the center and the six concentric "slices" that represent the Six Realms. The gallery also shows the Buddha figures in the corners and Yama, the fearsome creature holding the wheel in his

hooves.

Many Buddhists understand the wheel in a purely allegorical way. As you examine the parts of the wheel, you may identify with some of them personally or recognize people you know as some of its characters like Envious Gods, Beings from Hell, or Hungry Ghosts.

The Wheel's outer circle (not shown in detail in this image) is Paticca Samuppada, the « links of Dependent Origination ».

Traditionally, the outer wheel represents a blind man or woman (representing ignorance); potters (training); a monkey (consciousness); two men in a boat (mind and body); a house with six windows (the senses); a couple embracing (contact); an eye pierced by an arrow (sensation); a person drinking (thirst); a man picking fruit (attachment); a couple making love (coming to be); a woman giving birth (light, life); and a man carrying a corpse (death).

## *2: The Wheel of Life: Yama, Lord of the Underworld: The Choleric Dharmapala from Hell*

The creature holding the Wheel of Life in his hooves is Yama, the choleric Dharmapala, the Lord of the Realm of Hell. Yama, Lord of the Underworld, represents death and holds the wheel in his hooves.



The terrible face of Yama, which represents death, peeks over the Wheel. Despite his appearance, Yama is not evil. He is a choleric Dharmapala, a creature dedicated to protecting Buddhism and Buddhists. Although we may fear death, it is not evil; it is just inevitable.

In the legend, Yama was a holy man who believed that he would attain enlightenment if he meditated in a cave for 50 years. In the 11th month of the 49th year, thieves entered the cave with a stolen bull and cut off the bull's head. When they realized that the holy man had seen them, the thieves also cut off his head.

But the holy man put on the bull's head and assumed the terrible form of Yama. He killed the thieves, drank their blood, and threatened all of Tibet. He could not be stopped until Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Wisdom, manifested as the even more terrible Dharmapala Yamantaka and defeated Yama, who became a protector of Buddhism.

### *3: The Wheel of Life: The Kingdom of the Gods:*

Being a God is not perfect. The Kingdom of the Gods (Devas) is the highest realm of the Wheel of Life and is always represented at the Wheel's top.



The Kingdom of the Gods (Devas) is in a good place to exist, but even it is not perfect.

Those born in the Kingdom of the Gods live long lives full of pleasure. They have wealth, power, and happiness. The problem is that

because the Devas have rich and happy lives, they end up not recognizing the truth of suffering. Their happiness is in a sense a curse because they have no motivation to seek liberation from the Wheel.

Eventually, their happy lives end, and they must face rebirth in another, less happy realm. The Devas are perpetually at war with their neighbors on the Wheel, the Asuras. This representation of the Wheel shows the Devas attacking the Asuras.

#### *4: The Wheel of Life: The Realm of the Asuras: Jealous Gods and Paranoia*

The Asura Kingdom (Jealous God) is marked by paranoia. The Asuras Kingdom is also called the Gods or Jealous Titans. Asuras are extremely competitive and paranoid.



They are driven by the desire to beat their competitors, and everyone is a competitor. They have power and resources, and sometimes they accomplish good things with them. But always, their first priority is to get to the top. I think of powerful politicians or corporate leaders when I think of Asuras.

Chih-i (538-597), a patriarch of the T'ien- t'ai school, described the Asura this way: "Always desiring to be superior to others, having no patience for inferiors and belittling strangers; like a hawk, flying high and looking down on others, and yet outwardly displaying righteousness, worship,



wisdom, and faith-that is elevating the lowest order of good and walking the path of the Asuras. "

Asuras, who are also called "anti-gods," are perpetually at war with the Devas of the Realm of the Gods. Asuras think they belong in the Realm of the Gods and are fighting to get in, although here it appears that the Asuras have formed a defense line and are fighting off the attacking Devas with bows and arrows. Some representations of the Wheel of Life combine the Asura and God Realms into one. Sometimes there is a beautiful tree

growing between the two kingdoms, with its roots and trunk in the Asura kingdom. But its branches and fruits are in the Kingdom of God

### *5: The Wheel of Life: Kingdom of the Hungry Ghosts :*

They have desires that can never be satisfied. Hungry Ghosts have huge, empty stomachs, but their thin necks do not

allow nutrition to pass. Food turns to fire and ash in their mouths. Hungry ghosts ( Black ) are miserable things. They are lost creatures with huge, empty stomachs. Their necks are too thin to allow food to pass through. So they are constantly hungry. Greed and jealousy lead to rebirth as a



Hungry Ghost.

The Hungry Ghost Realm is often, but not always, depicted between the Asura Realm and the Hell Realm. It is thought that the karma of their lives was not bad enough for a rebirth in the Hell Realm but not good enough for the Asura Realm.

Psychologically, Hungry Ghosts are associated with addictions, compulsions, and obsessions. People who have everything, but always want more, can be Hungry Ghosts.

## *6: The Wheel of Life: The Kingdom of Hell: Fire and Ice*

Rage, terror, and claustrophobia mark Hell's Kingdom.

The Hell Realm is described as a place partly of fire and partly of ice. In the fiery part of the realm, the Beings of Hell (



Narakas ) are subject to pain and torment. In the icy part, they are frozen. Psychologically speaking. All Beings of Hell are recognized by their constant and uncontrolled aggression.

The Beings of Hellfire are angry and abusive and

They scare away anyone who loves or befriends

them. The Icy Beings from Hell push others away with their callous coldness. Then, in the torment of their isolation, their aggression turns more and more inward, and they become self-destructive.

## *7: The Wheel of Life: The Animal Kingdom: No Sense of Humor*

Animal beings ( Tiryakas ) are solid, regular, and predictable. They cling to what is familiar and are disinterested, even fearful, of anything strange.



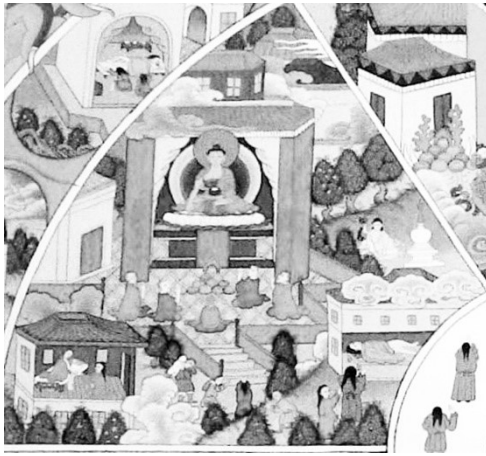
The animal kingdom is marked by ignorance and complacency. Animal beings have no stubborn curiosity and are repelled by everything unfamiliar.

They spend their lives seeking comfort and avoiding discomfort. They have no sense of humor. Animal beings can find contentment

but easily become afraid when put into a new situation. Naturally, they are prejudiced and are likely to remain so. At the same time, they are subject to oppression from other beings :- animals devour each other.

## *8: The Wheel of Life: The Human Kingdom: The Hope of Liberation*

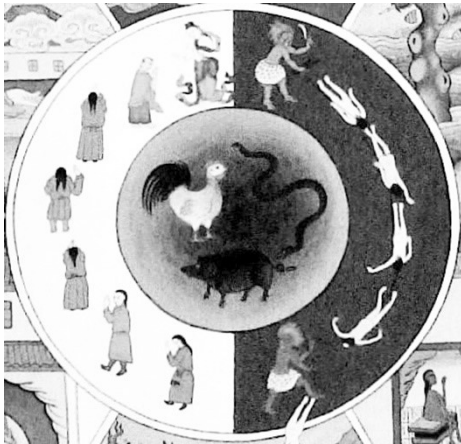
Liberation from the wheel is only possible in the human realm. The human realm of the Wheel of Life



marked by questioning and curiosity. It is also a realm of passion; human beings ( Manushyas ) desire to strive, to consume, to acquire, to enjoy, to explore. Here the Dharma is openly available, but only a few seek it. The rest get caught up in striving, consuming, and acquiring, and miss the

opportunity

### *9: The Wheel of Life: The Center: What Makes the Wheel Turn*



At the center of the Wheel of Life are the forces that keep it turning - greed, anger, and ignorance. The center of the Wheel of Life At the center of each Wheel of Life are a rooster, a snake, and a pig, representing greed, anger, and ignorance. In Buddhism, greed, anger (or hatred), and ignorance are called the

"Three Poisons" because they poison those who harbor them.

These are the forces that keep the Wheel of Life turning, according to the Buddha's teaching on the Second Noble Truth. The circle outside the center, which is sometimes missing from representations of the Wheel, is called the Sidpa Bardo, or intermediate state. It is also sometimes called the White Path and the Dark Path. On the one hand, the bodhisattvas guide beings to rebirths in the higher realms of Devas, Gods, and Humans. On the other hand, demons lead beings to the lower realms of Hungry Ghosts, Hell Beings, and Animals.

### *10: The Wheel of Life: The Buddha Dharmakaya*

In the upper right corner of the Wheel of Life, the Buddha appears, representing the hope of liberation.



In many representations of the Wheel of Life, the figure in the upper right corner is a Buddha Dharmakaya. The dharmakaya is sometimes called the Truth Body or Dharma Body and is identified with the Shunyata .

Dharmakaya is everything, unmanifested, free of characteristics and distinctions. Often, this Buddha is shown pointing at

the moon, which represents enlightenment. However, in this version, the Buddha stands with his hands raised, as if blessing

## 11: The Wheel of Life: The Door to Nirvana

The upper left corner of a Bhavachakra is filled with a scene or symbol representing liberation from the Wheel. In the



upper left corner of this representation of the Wheel of Life is a temple with a seated Buddha. A stream of beings arises from the Realms of Humans toward the temple, which represents Nirvana. Artists who create a Wheel of Life fill this space in

various ways. Sometimes the upper left figure is a Nirmanakaya Buddha, representing bliss. Sometimes the artist paints a moon, symbolizing liberation

## Buddhism and Religion

The title is another useless speculation, according to the thought of the Buddha. A cultural cliché, a label that one wants to give to all things to pretentiously identify them - at a mere glance, without ever actually knowing them. According to this, we only have time for the really important things of our millennium's neuroses. Among them is not the verb to live.

However, considering the profile of contemporary history and the systemic permanence of the religion/conflict binomial, let's get into that.

To make sure we are talking about the same thing, let's conceptualize what religion is.

The Latin term is derived from "re-ligare", meaning: "to bind again", to reattach what was separate.

The name «Religare » is given since ancient times to all belief systems that aimed to reestablish the connection between men and divinity, considered broken at some point due to the man's fault. This break happened because, in some way, the man had offended divinity with his behavior, distancing himself from god, and deserving the suffering that was imposed on him as punishment. In this way, the individual human being, whose individuality is immortal through an eternal soul, needs to approach the divinity again, through the practice of a series of precepts, to receive from it, after his physical death, access to a world of eternal satisfaction.

Indeed, this formulation has evolved over time. Today encompasses quite varied forms of the concept, to a point where it becomes difficult to establish its contours with clarity, motivating complex ethnological and sociological studies considered by E.B.Tylor in chapter XI of his book "Primitive Culture, published in 1871.

From the archaic concept of "re-ligare," which was later discussed by Emile Durkheim, evolved the acceptance of a "minimum necessary" foundation for a conceptual configuration of the existence of a religion, which would be a **"central concern with a deity."** (Jonathan Jong-"Belief in Spiritual Beings ': E. B. Tylor's Primitive Cognitive Theory of Religion in <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53578960e4b0cc61351ba675/t/5a4e2c8ee4966b5d9ed2a4f4/1515072658082/Jong+2017+++Tylor.pdf> )

Taylor's position became accepted by a large number of scholars nowadays, but, although true, it becomes a fragile simplification in the face of the tendencies to approach the religious conceptual field to various forms of humanism, social philosophies, and other ideas, always based on the discussion of what "divinity" really is.

Therefore, we understand that to define something as religion. We must add to "Tylor's minimum," to have both a cognitive and ethnographic concept, the following:

- a) Every religion is a **belief system**, not an isolated belief;
- b) This system is tied to a center that proclaims the **existence of a deity** capable of creating and governing the world and men (Tylor);
- c) Around this center of the belief system, other complementary and necessary beliefs form and sustain themselves, establishing at the very least the **existence of an eternal soul of** the individual and a reward/punishment structure to be experienced eternally after the death of the physical body.



Religion is inexorably a dualistic system founded on metaphysical assumptions.

Whether ancient or modern, any religion invariably presents these foundations, with none of them missing. If it does not, it is not a religion but another ontological, cosmological or cognitive model to be defined.

In Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions, we see these elements firmly stated. In Christianity, for example, the man was God's favorite creature and lived in a paradise where all other beings were there to serve him. One day man disobeyed the deity in a way that was never clearly explained, and for this, he was subjected to suffering. Therefore, it is necessary to reconnect him to divinity to reach an eternity of elusive personal happiness, maintaining his human identity existing before his physical death. The way to achieve such eternity means abiding by the beliefs, following the practices and rites, and obeying the precepts established by that religion.

It is popularly said that Buddha founded a religion. He did not found any religion.

Also, of Jesus of Nazareth, they said he founded a church, which he never established as a matter of fact. There is no proof of what I am saying. There is the counterevidence of a few lines of texts written 30 years after his death, by people who never saw or heard him, such as the gospel claim that Jesus would have said: "Peter, you are a rock, and on it I will found my church.

According to several modern revisionist theologians, Jesus did not and never would say that.

Jesus did not want to found any church. He preached a spiritualistic and libertarian worldview and proposed a

humanistic scatological doctrine of extraordinary beauty and coherence.

Then he was murdered by the religious Jews in the name of their gods, in a macabre ceremony of hatred and horror, to make it clear, to anyone who would, that Jewish clergy would not admit anything that spoke louder to the submissive peoples than their dark scriptures and their shady dealings with the Roman invader.

In the case of Buddha, I have evidence from a wealth of literature of the time, preserved in the early communities, and reproducing his own words that rule out any idea of religiosity in its true structural sense.

Buddha could not have founded a religion because he ostensibly denied everything essential to the construction of such a belief system.

**Buddha was agnostic;** he did not accept the existence of a creator god of the universe and beings, governing men's lives, their joys and sufferings, their mistakes and successes, their destinies, successes, and failures.

Quite to the contrary, Siddhartha believed in man arising from the evolutionary process of nature, which carries no written destiny, no specific mission or pre-established training, no eternal soul, no essence that precedes existence.

Millennia before Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, Buddha was a precursor of existentialism: the man who constructs himself from his experience, based on his knowledge of things and his personal experience, which give him consciousness and freedom of choice. A being that at every moment knows, chooses, and acts, being the only one responsible for his own experience.

Existence precedes essence.

The foundation of religious anthropology, whatever it may be, carves out an incapable and impotent man, a beggar with hands outstretched to the all-supplying deity, begging for the satisfaction of his desires and trembling under the weight of his fears and guilt. For Buddhism, this image is an aberration.

Buddha did not accept an eternal individual soul.

I sometimes read writings claiming that Buddha created "a non-theistic religion. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the meaning of this statement, and I have concluded that it has the same meaning as saying that there is a "square ball" or a "beanless bean." It is made by someone who knows neither the subject nor the predicate: he doesn't know who Buddha was, and he doesn't know what religion means.

Buddha did not do religion; he did science. He was one of the precursors of scientific realism, psychoanalysis, analytic philosophy, existentialism, feminism, epistemology, theory, and criticism of knowledge, social psychology, positive psychology, ecological preservationism, and concepts concerning matter and energy that only very recently quantum physics has been able to prove.

On the other hand, Buddha never fought religion, whatever it was, simply because his doctrine did not need to destroy anything at all, such as people's beliefs, to exist. Buddha recommended respect for all religions and beliefs, but he had none, nor did he propose any.

## Ethics

When Buddha proclaimed the principles of Buddhism, he placed a strong emphasis on ethical knowledge and behavior. They constitute one of the three focuses of higher education: science, ethics, and mind.

Of all humanist doctrines, Buddhism is the one that places the most importance on the ethical structure, to the point that it constitutes one of the three fundamental structures of knowledge: it is one of the three higher educations, without which no one attains the accurate purposes of his life. Moreover, without the understanding of Buddhist ethics, it is not possible to understand its worldview.

The original Buddhist communities were the first academies of ethical philosophy in the world, and their quality has not been surpassed to this day because of their rational, experimental structure and realistic thinking, the understanding of ethics as an objective behavioral model, without metaphysical origins, and the absence of contamination from religious, political, or economic influences.

When this doctrine arose, the entire ethical context, no matter where or when, originated from two sources that determined its content, form, precepts, rules, rites, and beliefs: religion and political-economic power (the state, governments, political thought, and all its interests).

The history of religions, philosophy, and politics shows This is **still the case today**.

What Buddha proposed clashed in content with much of what existed around ethics at the time. He respected all the beliefs, religions, and values of society, but what he thought went far beyond what he saw and understood at the time.

They clashed so that their thought cannot be seen today as a parallel, Protestant, divergent moral doctrine. No, it was an **opposing** and **excluding** doctrine, just as Galileo Galilei's heliocentric theory was in the face of narrow-minded and ignorant medieval geocentrism.

Buddha observed with great lucidity the world in which he lived. Perceiving it, he wondered how the basic behavior that led men living in society was made and expressed:

*"This world is shrouded in darkness. Only a few can see here. Few birds escape the trap. Only a few escape to the light of the sky. (Dhammapada verse 174)*

Buddha's comment was a fundamental questioning that inquired about the state of ethics, which resonates to this day.

Now, more than 2000 years later, the "light from heaven" has not yet attracted a significant number of people. Our globalized world, born out of the most important technological revolution humanity has ever seen, is predominantly inhabited by robotic, digitalized, virtualized, inanimate, massified, and desperate people.

In the millennium of the "self", not knowing how to reinvent himself from the enclosure of his sameness, the man who has become lonely and socially disintegrated clings to what is worst in the species: the illusionist image of himself, the definitive blindness of narcissism.

The impressions that inhabited the mind of the Buddha, in its most profound sense, are the same ones we make today or see expressed in social media blogs, in T-shirt designs, in tasteless body tattoos, in reality, shows, and in what we see when we look through our windows.

"What ethics are these? What gods are these? What beings are these? What allowed them to cover human history with blood, misery, and pain? What heavens and what moral codes gave them legitimacy for the cruel wars of conquest, from antiquity to the medieval Christian crusades, the torture chambers of the so-called "Holy Inquisition," the recent invasive domination of European imperialism decimating native populations in the Americas, enslaving countries and continents like India and Africa, while Queen Victoria proclaimed her neurotic and hypocritical modesty. What gods marched, lending their name and spreading terror in the "holy wars" of the middle east? What gods, what beings are these who bless uniformed murderers, who destroy the world we live in, who cover us with hatred, or who annihilate species to make luxury coats for the icons of lust and vulgarity? Who are these gods, these people or rulers who drop atomic bombs on 250,000 innocents, set Vietnam on fire with napalm, and sleep soundly while sub-Saharan Africa agonizes in hunger, ignorance, and misery?"

What morality is this, what gods are these, what beings are we, more insane, putrid, and cruel than the demons we claim to protect ourselves from, and who seem to us to be the propellants of ignorance, violence, hatred, stupidity, and disgrace?

What religions are those that create monstrous gods to applaud and justify the stupid insanity of the powerful, to invent false miracles, as false are all miracles, that seduce their subjects and embrace narrow-minded lies to dominate

minds. Who are these beings or children of delusions, who have seized knowledge, silenced science, and sanctified ignorance for millennia so that their earthly and corrupt power may be perpetuated? While clinging to their material fortunes, they pour their scorn and indifference on human tragedy. What religions are these that, cowering, remain silent in the face of genocide, extreme injustice, sordid ideologies, perversion, and sexual abuse of their priests, all so as not to expose their material treasures and political power to risk?"

There are no ethics; there are no gods. All religions are merely human and power-hungry organizations, harvesting untold treasures from fear, ignorance, and the deranged delirium of the collective imagination, skilfully conducted by evil hands and minds experienced in keeping open misunderstood human wounds, the raw material of their power and status quo. Congregations of vultures speaking in the name of narcissistic and cruel gods that spring from their insane minds."

There are no ethics in the world we live in. What we are given to see is only the aggrandizement of a predatory and desperate species.

Whether this or another vision of the world and civilization that the Buddha held, the fact is that he saw the flighty birds in search of light as men building an ethic through their own lives. There are no gods or rulers, or demons that can do it. We are the gods, we are our demons, and only we can build ethics.

However, few of us who rage against the gods and rulers accept to submit their beliefs, their existence, their "self," their personal powers, their fortunes, and their identity to critical analysis as hard and extreme as the one we are making here.

Few accept to dive so deeply into reality and ask ourselves what we ask of the gods and rulers.

For that is precisely the conceptual gateway to Buddhist ethics: the deepest of all reflective forays into knowing and critiquing our existence's reality, our identity. It is an incursion into what we are when detached from our beliefs, our disguises, lies and half-truths, ignorance, indifference, fears, and narcissism, which turns us into ridiculous creatures divinizing ourselves.

This nuclear and devastating reflection on what we are in ourselves and what we represent or mean to other people, to human society, to our planet, to the cosmic whole to which we belong, is the most intimate seed of ethics that, whatever the brutality of the feet that crush it, will always survive in our collective unconscious.

To achieve it, one does not use codes of precepts, laws written on tablets or whispered by gods to listening prophets, nor a deontological collection of permitted and forbidden acts. All of this is vain. We will not take a cataloged index of good and evil in this immense dive inside ourselves, but we will seek the naked reality about everything we are and do. When we acquire this knowledge, we will know clearly what unites us and what separates us from humanity, what we add to and subtract from the lives around us, what we create and destroy by our presence, how much we grow or shrink each day by our way of being, what we hold within us of cognizable truth, and what universe of fantasies and illusions we carry on our shoulders.

There are no codes, no laws, no punishments or rewards; no one will tell us anything, agree or disagree. There will be no messages from gods along the way, no plagues from demons; we will find no multiple-choice tests to try our luck.



In this silent universe we will be in the company only of the most dangerous of all companions: ourselves.

Only those who sincerely and deeply make this painful and demolishing journey, no matter how much time or circumstances it may have required, will honestly know who they are and, finally, become ethical people by their own nature and choice.

Buddha concluded that without ethics, humanity could only walk towards the horror of its own destruction. The precepts of an ethical context cannot be in the beliefs and practices that exist today.

This insight's natural consequence is that people can only achieve happiness if they are ethical because there is no happiness without truth and no truth without ethics.

When he elected the learning and knowledge of ethics as one of the three higher studies indispensable for attaining happiness, he was not only talking about the academic or theoretical study of ethics but mainly about the deep knowledge of ourselves.

**"Know thyself,"** as later inscribed on the entrance portico of the temple of the god Apollo in the city of Delphi in Greece in the 4th century BC.

When talking about ethics, we tend to stick to what Western deontological ethics has always taught us. Deontological ethics is that which establishes or expresses a "codex" (from the Latin, which means "book," "block of wood"), a descriptive list of what is evil and should be avoided by men. These moral codes' origin is always considered divine and have come to men by revelation. God created these laws and revealed them to humans; this is how he wants men and the world to be.

Although Buddhism also adopts ethical precepts (such as the five precepts: avoid killing or hurting living beings, avoid stealing, avoid sexual misconduct, avoid lying, and avoid alcohol and other intoxicating substances), it is not expressed codification, and even less in a deontological model.

Buddhist ethics is a behavioral model, originating, therefore, not from celestial dictates, but the learnings necessary for life in common, for survival, and the arrangements of collaborative interrelationship, essential in the social evolution of the species.

Buddhist ethical concern is not focused on a list, whatever it may be, of things that should not be done. The great Buddhist concern in the field of ethics lies in identifying the causes of behavior that is antisocial and harmful to the individual.

These causes are not a quasi-legal list of "sins" that are to be searched for, combated, controlled, and avoided in their effects. All these causes are aspects of human behavior, common and found in all people, and not demons or other imaginary entities outside the individual.

This way, the correct ethical behavior does not mean simply avoiding doing this or that act. Ethical behavior expresses control in your mind that can generate that act and many others similar to it, which the codes do not mention. There are no codes that purify us; we only purify ourselves by knowing and controlling certain aspects of our nature that inhabit our minds: they are our "poisons."

It is a relatively short list but with unlimited content. The Buddha says that we all carry three **poisons in our minds**; they reside all the evil we can do: **passion, aggression, and indifference.**

The three poisons of our mind are always inscribed in the center of Samsara as if to show at every moment the origin of all our suffering.



This representation is made with three animal figures: a **rooster**, a **snake**, and a **pig**.

The Rooster represents Passion (also called attachment, greed, or lust): Whatever is good, we want more of it. Above all, the ego is attached to whatever

### *The three poisons of the mind*

guarantees its survival - physically, psychologically or spiritually. At the same time, passion carries the seeds of love and connection, and therefore, of the three poisons, it is the one that still offers some path to enlightenment.

The Snake represents Aggression (dislike, anger, hatred): We try to repel anything that we believe may hurt or threaten us. Because we are willing to hurt others to protect ourselves, aggression is the most significant cause of our sufferings, even on a large scale.

The Pig represents indifference, which causes people to prioritize their pleasure, interest, greed, and ego over the suffering of billions of other people, which goes unnoticed or is pushed out of their minds as something bothersome. Indifference is the opposite of empathy and compassion.

The meaning of these elements has great force in Buddhist thought, which assigns to each person the sole responsibility

for commanding his or her mind so as not to be dominated by any of these poisons

In all the Buddhist canons, there are references to Mara, the demon who subjected Buddha to all temptations while he lived a mendicant life searching for enlightenment. These references are repeated in several other scriptural subjects. It is common then to hear the question, "If Buddha denies the existence of a god, how can he claim the existence of a demon? I repeatedly say that nothing in Buddhism can be understood literally. The demon Mara is a figuration that symbolizes the conjunction of these three poisons in one mind: the "perfect storm" of what is worst in us.

Mara is not an entity; it is the dangerous aggregation of the poisons of our mind. Each of us has a latent Mara in our mind, and controlling it is our task.

From the philosophers comes another question: In this causal concept of non-deontological ethics and in the absence of a comprehensive "codex", how does one know what is right to do in every situation?

Buddha taught that the answer is simple: concerning everything you do, ask yourself if good results are expected from it, and want this to be a general rule for all people. If the sincere answer is positive, you are doing good.

On a serene autumn afternoon in 1787 in Königsberg, Prussia, a professor at the local university said precisely the same thing and called this statement the **"hypothetical imperative,"** one of the most debated concepts in ethics throughout history of philosophy. His name was Immanuel Kant.

## 11

## The Kalinga Carnage and the Conquest by the Truth

The Kalinga War was one of the most defining episodes in the history of Buddhism and the cultural development of Eurasia, bringing to the fore an intriguing, paradoxical character of extraordinary intensity: Samrat Ashoka, or Ashoka the Great, Ashoka the Beloved of the Gods, or Ashoka the Merciless, Ashoka the Cruel.

Such opposite and equally valid things fit in this man's life in an indistinctly intense way. Everything that can be said about him today is a strange mixture of historically proven reality, and shreds of legend picked up along the paths of any research done on him and imposed themselves as logical fragments necessary to complete his image so complex and poorly explained.

Someday, probably in the year 304 BC, he was born in Pataliputra, where today is India's Bihar area.

Pataliputra was then an expanding kingdom that approached nearby provinces or kingdoms to dominate them and increase its territory, advancing in commercial power.

The Mauryan dynasty and ethnicity reigned, established there by Ashoka's grandfather, Chandragupta, who confronted and drove out of ~India what remained of the Greek militarism left by Alexander the Great.

Ashoka was the son of the firstborn Bindusāra with one of his several wives, Shubhadrangi, or Dharma, in Pāli, who came from Brahmin tradition and family.

As there is no royal family without intrigues around power, this could not be lacking for Ashoka. His mother, Dharma, was not well regarded by Mauryan royalty, precisely because she was of Brahmin origin, nor was her son Ashoka, both of whom were kept distant from royal affairs.

Ashoka's rejection by his father, Bindusara, was visible, as was his preference for his three eldest sons: especially Susima, the favorite for the throne.

Against this backdrop of rejection and intrigue, Ashoka's attachment to her mother and younger brother took on dimensions of great intensity. His mother, Dharma, was the absolute center of his feelings.

Parallel to this scenario, Ashoka received an exquisite education and intense military training from his early teens. He became known as a great hunter and an incomparable military commander at a very young age, boasting an astonishing mastery of all the martial arts. His education made him what today we call "a killing machine."

At the age of eighteen, he became a general in the Mauryan armies.

Ashoka's incredible and rampant growth in military skills and his ascendancy over the troops began to pose a threat to his older brothers' aspirations, led by Susima.

It became necessary to remove Ashoka at any cost before he came to have full ascendancy over the armies and became a contender for the throne. On this path, both his father and his three older brothers engineered his exile

because the son of a Brahmin could not reside in the palace in Pataliputra.

Ashoka made his way anonymously to Kalinga and remained there in exile. Some accounts state that in Kalinga, he met a woman, the daughter of a merchant, and married her informally, concealing her identity.

It turned out that Ashoka was militarily valuable for his father Bindusara's reign and was sent by him back from exile to quell an armed rebellion in the province of Ujjain. Ashoka succeeded, but two determining facts occurred. The first is that, from the conditions of the military campaign delegated to him (tactical information, condition and availability of armaments, and many other details), he came to strongly suspect that his brother Susima had engineered his intervention in Ujjain in a way by which he would be easily defeated and killed. The second fact is that, although he won (against his brother's expectations), he was severely wounded in the battle and would die if not urgently attended to.

His generals secretly led him to a nearby Buddhist Sangha, where he hid from his brother and was attended by the monks and nuns with constant attention.

The monks put at their exclusive service a nurse, a merchant's daughter, who was part of the Sangha: Maharani Devi, whom, once he recovered, he married.

However, he could not return to Pataliputra because to his father, Bindusara, it was unacceptable for one of his sons to be married to a Buddhist.

Bindusara then decided to send him back to Ujjain and made him governor of Ujjain.

After some time, his father Bindusar passed away, and Ashoka returned to Pataliputra with his wife Devi, who was pregnant with their first child, for his burial ceremonies.

His brother Susima then orders one of his commanders to go to his wife Devi's room to kill her, thus preventing Ashoka from having descendants, which made it difficult for her to apply for the throne left by her father.

His mother, Dharma, was in Devi's company and reacted when she realized what was going on. To escape the scene, the killer chokes Dharma to death and then flees.

With the cowardly murder of his mother, Ashoka becomes a man dominated by hate, for whom death and destruction become the only expressions of his pain and the only reality to which he clings.

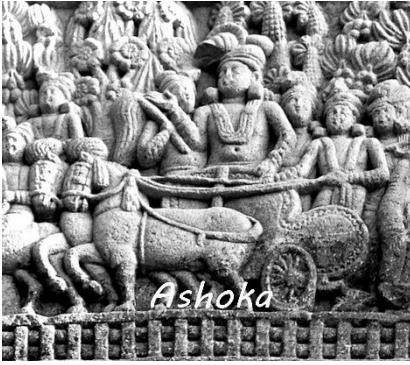
Ashoka then kills his three older brothers, each in a different situation, and takes over the Mauryan empire crown.

He becomes a despotic ruler and a bloodthirsty and merciless warrior: Ashoka The Cruel, whose hatred could not be appeased by anything.

The emperor Mauryan begins an uncontrolled expansion of his empire, increasing his territory by continuously dominating nearby kingdoms, marching on them with his wrath and spreading destruction and horror.

Accounts tell that the emperor even created what was called "Ashoka's hell" in camouflage. The hell was a series of torture chambers cleverly designed to make their exterior visually pleasing to conceal their true contents, where the methods used against his enemies included roasting people alive, amputating pieces of themselves to be given to the beasts, severing all four limbs, and leaving the torso to die of hunger and thirst, etc.





His insanity worsened until his wife Maharani Devi, with whom he already had two children, left him and left with them because she could no longer bear to live with his hatred and sadism. In this avalanche of terror, Ashoka's eyes turned to Kalinga, a nearby kingdom in which he had already

taken refuge and which now interested him as a territory and as a trading center in southwest India.

Kalinga, however, besides being very prosperous and cultured, one of the centers of Buddhism at the time, was a city of participative and democratic administration for its time, and all the powers of the state were always involved in the decisions of the people. These people decided to defend their land and their freedom, and all joined together to keep Kalinga protected from Ashoka's clutches.

What history calls the "Kalinga War" lasted approximately 12 days. By the end of this period, Ashoka had lost 5,000 of his good warriors, and around Kalinga, the land was covered with 150,000 corpses of the defenders of his freedom, including mutilated women, older men, and children, chopped up, shredded, and burned over a sea of blood that still floated on the mud. All the neighboring villages were in flames. A few mutilated people were still making a last, desperate effort to live.

It had not been a war, but a slaughter, a carnage commanded by insane hands, driven by hatred and extreme stupidity: the massacre of Kalinga.

Legendary accounts say that at dusk, that macabre spectacle shrouded itself in silence and that Ashoka was walking among the bodies, observing his work when he came across an older man walking barefoot. Ashoka stopped the man and asked him: "what are you doing here? The man replied, "I was looking for you." "Why were you looking for me?" asked Ashoka, and the old man told him, "to congratulate you on your victory. You won. You won all those corpses. Take them with you; they are yours and will follow you all your life."

Whether or not this legendary encounter occurred, the fact is that the conquest of Kalinga led Ashoka to the pit of a deep depression. From a man overcome by hatred, he became someone tormented and corroded by remorse, submerged in his seclusion and condemned to live daily with the remains of the horrors his insanity had produced. Ashoka was heading toward self-destruction: the last monumental perversity he could commit.

His life had once been saved by the care he received in a Buddhist Sangha, and now Ashoka would again seek help among the Buddhists to prevent his mind from sinking into the darkness of irreversible madness.

At the time, Buddhism was still restricted to a few Indian cities, a local cultural and doctrinal movement, without ramifications or extensions. Kalinga and its Sanghas, however, were an important Buddhist center and could be easily accessed by Ashoka, who already knew the habits and precepts of these communities that one day saved his life. Besides, his wife Devi, who saved him from severe battle

injuries and became his wife, giving him two children, was a Buddhist and left him because she could not live with his uncontrolled rage. For all this history of familiarity with Buddhism, it is assumed that Ashoka knew something about its doctrine and saw a refuge in it for a second time.

There are no factual records of this process; it is not clear how it took place, or where, or how, or for how long. Ashoka left no records of this period of review of his life and actions because he did not share his immense depression with anyone, not even those closest to him.

It is also assumed that this process's results must not have been sudden but the consequence of progressive steps.

Moving from assumptions Going back to history and leaving the assumptions beside, the fact is that Ashoka underwent a profound and extensive reformulation of his own reality, which resulted in his renouncing war and all forms of domination and accepting Buddhist principles for his life's guidance government.

This unimaginable change was documented in one of his first edicts, which were carved on stone pillars and spread throughout north-northeast India to be known "by all peoples."

In the pillar of Maski Ashoka the "Beloved of the Gods", as the Maurya kings were called, expresses his remorse for the carnage of Kalinga and declares his "strong inclination towards the Dhamma" (the same as the Buddhist wheel of Dharma and its eight routes)

*"The beloved of the Gods, King Piyadasi, conquered the Kalingas eight years after his coronation. One hundred and fifty thousand were deported, one hundred thousand were*

*killed, and many more died (from other causes). After Kalinga was conquered, the Beloved of the Gods, came to feel a strong inclination for Dhamma, a love for Dhamma and for instructing in Dhamma. Now the beloved of the Gods feels deep remorse for having conquered Kalinga. (Edict on the stone Nb13 S. Dhammika)*

Today, a rustic stone 80 centimeters wide changed radically and forever the course of history and culture of the whole of Eurasia.

The tragedy of Kalinga, and the possible emotional impact on Ashoka, caused him to renounce military conquest and other forms of violence, including animal cruelty. He became a patron of Buddhism, supporting the emergence of the doctrine throughout India. Ashoka reportedly sent emissary monks to various countries, including Syria and Greece, and even his own sons as missionaries to Sri Lanka.

After embracing Buddhism, Ashoka embarked on pilgrimages to sites sacred to the Buddha and began to spread his thoughts on the dhamma. He ordained decrees, many referring to the dhamma or explaining the concept entirely, engraved in stone throughout his empire and sent Buddhist missionaries to other regions and nations, including Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, and modern Greece; in doing so, he established Buddhism as one of the world's major religions. These missionaries spread the Buddha's vision peacefully, for, as Ashoka had decreed, no one should elevate his religion above anyone else's; to do so devalued one's faith by assuming it was better than another's, and thus lost the humility needed to address sacred matters.

In this way, he used the economic and political power of the Maurya empire to expand the Buddha's teachings over an immense territory, taking them from the geographical smallness of their origins to their multicontinental spread.

Ashoka shared her new vision of life through edicts carved into stones and pillars located throughout the country at pilgrimage sites and busy trade routes. The edicts are considered one of the earliest examples of writing in Indian history. They were not recorded in Sanskrit - the state's official language - but in local dialects so that the messages could be widely understood. For example, an edict near modern-day Kandahar in Afghanistan, an area under Alexander the Great's control for some time, is written in Greek and Aramaic.

Like Cyrus in Persia, Ashoka adopted and promoted respect and tolerance policy for people of different religions. One edict declared, "All men are my sons. As for my own children, I wish them to receive all the welfare and happiness of this world and the next, so do I wish for all men.

Other edicts urged citizens to generosity, piety, justice, and mercy. Ashoka and his high ministers made occasional trips throughout the kingdom to check on the people's welfare and see how his decrees were being carried out. According to one pillar, the ministers provided medicine and hospitals for men and animals, taking care of earthly needs

In addition to his decrees, Ashoka built stupas, monasteries, and other religious structures at notable Buddhist sites such as Sarnath.

He efficiently administered a centralized government from the capital Maurya in Pataliputra. A large bureaucracy collected taxes. Inspectors reported to the emperor. Irrigation expanded agriculture. Familiar features of ancient

empires, excellent roads were built connecting important commercial and political centers; Ashoka ordered the roads to have shade trees, wells, and inns.

In this way, Ashoka transported the Buddhist precepts into a new social, political, and economic doctrine, which did not remain in the writings like Greek ethics and democracy, but was implanted as a demonstrable reality, as people's existential experience, and as ways of life that depend only on the most difficult: ethical and political will.

All this expansive action was called "**conquest by truth**," repelling conquest ideas by arms or conquest by money.

In this way, sown all over Eurasia, the Buddhist doctrine was carried by its canons but was being transformed in several aspects due to the relativity to so many different cultures. The great doctrinal bifurcation of Buddhism was born there, with the concepts of the "universal vehicle" and all its variations, starting from Nagarjuna.

Therefore, Ashoka's "conquest for truth" is the milestone where Buddhism had to detach itself from its roots and become lodged in so many cultures and beliefs with which it had to come to live.

Ashoka died after reigning for almost 40 years. His reign had enlarged and strengthened the Maurya Empire, yet it would not last until 50 years after his death. His name was eventually forgotten, his stupas overgrown, and his decrees, carved into majestic pillars, toppled over and buried by the sands.

After his death, Ashoka's humanistic style of government declined along with the Mauryan Empire itself. His empire fell into the realm of legend until archaeologists translated his edicts two millennia later. In their time, these edicts helped

unify a vast empire through their shared messages of virtue and spurred Buddhism's expansion throughout the world.

The history of Ashoka is a narrative that always runs into the discussion of the accounts' authenticity, given the scarcity of historical documents to fill in its gaps, which gives room to the imaginary. However, most of his edicts are based on original archaeological objects, and several complementary references support them, although their inexact context allows for different interpretations.

Some current scholars seek to find cracks in these narratives based on their claims' evidence's fragility. However, open any crack in the narrative, these scholars lack any negative element that is of better quality than the elements supporting the claim and end up filling the questions they raise with assumptions. At that point, they lose touch with scientific thinking and end up walking to the flavor of their imaginations.

One of the questions raised is whether or not Ashoka's repentance expressed in Maski's edict was truly sincere or merely politically opportunistic. Another issue raised questions about the possible degree of Ashoka's involvement with Buddhism pre-existing the Kalinga war. We can also find questions from researchers about whether or not Ashoka had the support of Greek mercenaries to kill his brothers and take the throne, and finally, why Ashoka made his edicts on columns placed in distant cities, which are written in local dialects if the local people could not read them because they were illiterate.

They are all useless questions with no historical, scientific, or literary value, and whatever their answers, they do not change the narrative, woven between historical evidence, literary scraps, and bits of legend.

The historically indisputable facts are that Ashoka, from Kalinga onwards, adopted Buddhist doctrine as his banner (whether sincere or insincere, political, spiritual, or contextual) and carried it throughout Eurasia until the end of his life, together with a model of developmentalism, pacifist and humanist public administration, with dimensions and extent not known in our contemporary history, or in our political philosophy, which has never been more than an academic rhetoric servile to power.

Ashoka's strange life is a context of great importance for Buddhism, not because at the time it had the strength of an empire to expand, but because its doctrine was able to transform a bloodthirsty psychopath into a competent humanistic, libertarian, pacifist administrator, like few that history has ever known. `On the other hand, Buddhism was also of remarkable importance to Ashoka, who, thanks to it, stopped being called "The Cruel One" and entered history as "Ashoka The Great," as great as Alexander was also cruel.



## Closing

Buddhism is like its millennial symbol, **the lotus flower**, which sprouts unnoticed in the submerged mud of the swamps, grows unnoticed, crossing the layer of water that covers it, and, when it passes through, blossoms untouched, like a magical work of the most profound and most extreme purity, inspiring strength many times greater than all the weapons of men: peace, non-violence.

Peace is not an institution or an atmosphere that surrounds us; it exists or not in ourselves as a product of our minds.

Buddha said that we are peace. It is enough to grow taller than the waters of the human species' dark swamps, in whose fertile sludge the universe has sowed us.

I leave here a text that, gently, expresses what Vinícius de Moraes, the iconic Brazilian poet told us in one of his last poems, "The Account", where he takes stock of his life: "There remains, still, this strong hand of man, full of meekness towards everything that exists. "

## KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

## THE KINDNESS SPEECH

Whoever is skilled in what is beneficial,  
 wishing to reach  
 that state of peace, acts like this:  
 capable, correct, honorable,  
 with the noble, gentle and arrogant  
 language,

Satisfied and easy to support,  
 without being demanding by nature, frugal  
 in his way of life,  
 the senses calmed, wise,  
 moderate, without coveting gains.

It does nothing, however trivial,  
 that is condemned by the wise.  
 Think: happy, secure,  
 that all beings have hearts full of bliss.

All living beings that exist,  
 weak or strong, without exception,  
 long, large,  
 medium, short,  
 subtle, coarse,

Visible and invisible,  
 near and far,  
 born and unborn:  
 may all beings have hearts full of bliss.

Let no one deceive  
 or despise another person, anywhere,  
 or due to anger or ill will,  
 wish someone to suffer.

Like a mother, putting her own life at risk,  
 she  
 loves and protects her child, her only child,  
 in the same way, embracing all beings,  
 cultivate a heart without limits.

With loving kindness to the entire universe,  
 cultivate a heart without limits:  
 Above, below and all around, unobstructed,  
 free from anger and ill will.

Whether standing, walking,  
 sitting, or lying down,  
 whenever you are awake,  
 cultivate that mindfulness:  
 this is called a divine abode  
 in the here and now Without being trapped  
 by ideas,  
 virtuous and with consummate vision,  
 having subdued the desire for sensual  
 pleasure, he will no longer be reborn.

**SIDARTHA GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA.**

"Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness" (Sn 1.8),  
 translated from the Pali by The Amaravati Sangha. Access to Insight  
 (BCBS Edition), November  
 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.amar.html>





## *ANNEX 1*

### THE DHAMMAPADA - THE PATH OF DHARMA

Translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita, and very kindly shared by Sanjin Dumišić for download in PDF format or audio book in <https://sanjindumisic.com/dhammapada-full-text-pdf-audiobook/>

Retrieved on Mar. 28, 2021

## Chapter 1 – Yamakavagga: Pairs

1. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.
2. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.
3. "He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred.
4. "He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who do not harbor such thoughts still their hatred.
5. Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal.
6. There are those who do not realize that one day we all must die. But those who do realize this settle their quarrels.
7. Just as a storm throws down a weak tree, so does Māra overpower the man who lives for the pursuit of pleasures, who is uncontrolled in his senses, immoderate in eating, indolent, and dissipated. (*Māra: the Tempter in Buddhism, represented in the scriptures as an evil-minded deity who tries to lead people from the path to liberation. The commentaries explain Māra as the lord of evil forces, as mental defilements and as death.*)

**8.** Just as a storm cannot prevail against a rocky mountain, so Māra can never overpower the man who lives meditating on the impurities, who is controlled in his senses, moderate in eating, and filled with faith and earnest effort. (*The impurities (asubha): subjects of meditation which focus on the inherent repulsiveness of the body, recommended especially as powerful antidotes to lust.*)

**9.** Whoever being depraved, devoid of self-control and truthfulness, should don the monk's yellow robe, he surely is not worthy of the robe.

**10.** But whoever is purged of depravity, well-established in virtues and filled with self-control and truthfulness, he indeed is worthy of the yellow robe.

**11.** Those who mistake the unessential to be essential and the essential to be unessential, dwelling in wrong thoughts, never arrive at the essential.

**12.** Those who know the essential to be essential and the unessential to be unessential, dwelling in right thoughts, do arrive at the essential.

**13.** Just as rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, so passion penetrates an undeveloped mind.

**14.** Just as rain does not break through a well-thatched house, so passion never penetrates a well-developed mind.

**15.** The evil-doer grieves here and hereafter; he grieves in both the worlds. He laments and is afflicted, recollecting his own impure deeds.

**16.** The doer of good rejoices here and hereafter; he rejoices in both the worlds. He rejoices and exults, recollecting his own pure deeds."

**17.** The evil-doer suffers here and hereafter; he suffers in both the worlds. The thought, "Evil have I done," torments him, and he suffers even more when gone to realms of woe.

**18.** The doer of good delights here and hereafter; he delights in both the worlds. The thought, "Good have I done," delights him, and he delights even more when gone to realms of bliss.

**19.** Much though he recites the sacred texts, but acts not accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who only counts the cows of others — he does not partake of the blessings of the holy life.

**20.** Little though he recites the sacred texts, but puts the Teaching into practice, forsaking lust, hatred, and delusion, with true wisdom and emancipated mind, clinging to nothing of this or any other world — he indeed partakes of the blessings of a holy life.

## **Chapter 2 – Appamādavagga: Heedfulness**

**21.** Heedfulness is the path to the Deathless. Heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful die not. The heedless are as if dead already. (*The Deathless (amata): Nibbāna, so called because those who attain it are free from the cycle of repeated birth and death.*)

**22.** Clearly understanding this excellence of heedfulness, the wise exult therein and enjoy the resort of the Noble Ones. (*The Noble Ones (ariya): those who have reached any of the*



*four stages of supramundane attainment leading irreversibly to Nibbāna.)*

**23.** The wise ones, ever meditative and steadfastly persevering, alone experience Nibbāna, the incomparable freedom from bondage.

**24.** Ever grows the glory of him who is energetic, mindful and pure in conduct, discerning and self-controlled, righteous and heedful.

**25.** By effort and heedfulness, discipline and self-mastery, let the wise one make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.

**26.** The foolish and ignorant indulge in heedlessness, but the wise one keeps his heedfulness as his best treasure.

**27.** Do not give way to heedlessness. Do not indulge in sensual pleasures. Only the heedful and meditative attain great happiness.

**28.** Just as one upon the summit of a mountain beholds the groundlings, even so when the wise man casts away heedlessness by heedfulness and ascends the high tower of wisdom, this sorrowless sage beholds the sorrowing and foolish multitude.

**29.** Heedful among the heedless, wide-awake among the sleepy, the wise man advances like a swift horse leaving behind a weak jade.

**30.** By Heedfulness did Indra become the overlord of the gods. Heedfulness is ever praised, and heedlessness ever despised. (*Indra: the ruler of the gods in ancient Indian mythology.*)

**31.** The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness advances like fire, burning all fetters, small and large.

**32.** The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness will not fall. He is close to Nibbāna.

### **Chapter 3 – Cittavagga: The Mind**

**33.** Just as a fletcher straightens an arrow shaft, even so the discerning man straightens his mind — so fickle and unsteady, so difficult to guard.

**34.** As a fish when pulled out of water and cast on land throbs and quivers, even so is this mind agitated. Hence should one abandon the realm of Māra.

**35.** Wonderful, indeed, it is to subdue the mind, so difficult to subdue, ever swift, and seizing whatever it desires. A tamed mind brings happiness.

**36.** Let the discerning man guard the mind, so difficult to detect and extremely subtle, seizing whatever it desires. A guarded mind brings happiness.

**37.** Dwelling in the cave (of the heart), the mind, without form, wanders far and alone. Those who subdue this mind are liberated from the bonds of Māra.

**38.** Wisdom never becomes perfect in one whose mind is not steadfast, who knows not the Good Teaching and whose faith wavers.

**39.** There is no fear for an awakened one, whose mind is not sodden (by lust) nor afflicted (by hate), and who has gone

beyond both merit and demerit. *(The arahant is said to be beyond both merit and demerit because, as he has abandoned all defilements, he can no longer perform evil actions; and as he has no more attachment, his virtuous actions no longer bear kammic fruit.)*

**40.** Realizing that this body is as fragile as a clay pot, and fortifying this mind like a well-fortified city, fight out Māra with the sword of wisdom. Then, guarding the conquest, remain unattached.

**41.** Ere long, alas! this body will lie upon the earth, unheeded and lifeless, like a useless log.

**42.** Whatever harm an enemy may do to an enemy, or a hater to a hater, an ill-directed mind inflicts on oneself a greater harm.

**43.** Neither mother, father, nor any other relative can do one greater good than one's own well-directed mind.

## Chapter 4 – Pupphavagga: Flowers

**44.** Who shall overcome this earth, this realm of Yama and this sphere of men and gods? Who shall bring to perfection the well-taught path of wisdom as an expert garland-maker would his floral design?

**45.** A striver-on-the path shall overcome this earth, this realm of Yama and this sphere of men and gods. The striver-on-the-path shall bring to perfection the well-taught path of wisdom, as an expert garland-maker would his floral design. *(The Striver-on-the-Path (sekha): one who has achieved any of*

*the first three stages of supramundane attainment: a stream-enterer, once-returner, or non-returner.)*

**46.** Realizing that this body is like froth, penetrating its mirage-like nature, and plucking out Māra's flower-tipped arrows of sensuality, go beyond sight of the King of Death!

**47.** As a mighty flood sweeps away the sleeping village, so death carries away the person of distracted mind who only plucks the flowers (of pleasure).

**48.** The Destroyer brings under his sway the person of distracted mind who, insatiate in sense desires, only plucks the flowers (of pleasure).

**49.** As a bee gathers honey from the flower without injuring its color or fragrance, even so the sage goes on his alms-round in the village. (*The "sage in the village" is the Buddhist monk who receives his food by going silently from door to door with his alms bowls, accepting whatever is offered.*)

**50.** Let none find fault with others; let none done by one born a mortal.

**54.** Not the sweet smell of flowers, not even the fragrance of sandal, tagara, or jasmine blows against the wind. But the fragrance of the virtuous blows against the wind. Truly the virtuous man pervades all directions with the fragrance of his virtue. (*Tagara: a fragrant powder obtained from a particular kind of shrub.*)

**55.** Of all the fragrances — sandal, tagara, blue lotus and jasmine — the fragrance of virtue is the sweetest.

**56.** Faint is the fragrance of tagara and sandal, but excellent is the fragrance of the virtuous, wafting even amongst the gods.

**57.** Māra never finds the path of the truly virtuous, who abide in heedfulness and are freed by perfect knowledge.

**58.** Upon a heap of rubbish in the road-side ditch blooms a lotus, fragrant and pleasing.

**59.** Even so, on the rubbish heap of blinded mortals the disciple of the Supremely Enlightened One shines resplendent in wisdom.

## **Chapter 5 – Bālavagga: The Fool**

**60.** Long is the night to the sleepless; long is the league to the weary. Long is worldly existence to fools who know not the Sublime Truth.

**61.** Should a seeker not find a companion who is better or equal, let him resolutely pursue a solitary course; there is no fellowship with the fool.

**62.** The fool worries, thinking, "I have sons, I have wealth." Indeed, when he himself is not his own, whence are sons, whence is wealth?

**63.** A fool who knows his foolishness is wise at least to that extent, but a fool who thinks himself wise is a fool indeed.

**64.** Though all his life a fool associates with a wise man, he no more comprehends the Truth than a spoon tastes the flavor of the soup.

**65.** Though only for a moment a discerning person associates with a wise man, quickly he comprehends the Truth, just as the tongue tastes the flavor of the soup.

**66.** Fools of little wit are enemies unto themselves as they move about doing evil deeds, the fruits of which are bitter.

**67.** Ill done is that action of doing which one repents later, and the fruit of which the tip of a blade of grass, but he still is not worth a sixteenth part of the those who have comprehended the Truth.

**71.** Truly, an evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit, like milk that does not turn sour all at once. But smoldering, it follows the fool like fire covered by ashes.

**72.** To his own ruin the fool gains knowledge, for it cleaves his head and destroys his innate goodness.

**73.** The fool seeks undeserved reputation, precedence among monks, authority over monasteries, and honor among householders.

**74.** "Let both laymen and monks think that it was done by me. In every work, great and small, let them follow me" — such is the ambition of the fool; thus his desire and pride increase.

**75.** One is the quest for worldly gain, and quite another is the path to Nibbāna. Clearly understanding this, let not the monk, the disciple of the Buddha, be carried away by worldly acclaim, but develop detachment instead.

## Chapter 6 – Paṇḍitavagga: The Wise

**76.** Should one find a man who points out faults and who reproves, let him follow such a wise and sagacious person as one would a guide to hidden treasure. It is always better, and never worse, to cultivate such an association.

**77.** Let him admonish, instruct and shield one from wrong; he, indeed, is dear to the good and detestable to the evil.

**78.** Do not associate with evil companions; do not seek the fellowship of the vile. Associate with the good friends; seek the fellowship of noble men.

**79.** He who drinks deep the Dhamma lives happily with a tranquil mind. The wise man ever delights in the Dhamma made known by the Noble One (the Buddha).

**80.** Irrigators regulate the rivers; fletchers straighten the arrow shaft; carpenters shape the wood; the wise control themselves.

**81.** Just as a solid rock is not shaken by the storm, even so the wise are not affected by praise or blame.

**82.** On hearing the Teachings, the wise become perfectly purified, like a lake deep, clear and still.

**83.** The good renounce (attachment for) everything. The virtuous do not prattle with a yearning for pleasures. The wise show no elation or depression when touched by happiness or sorrow.

**84.** He is indeed virtuous, wise, and righteous who neither for his own sake nor for the sake of another (does any wrong), who does not crave for sons, wealth, or kingdom, and does not desire success by unjust means.

**85.** Few among men are those who cross to the farther shore. The rest, the bulk of men, only run up and down the hither bank.

**86.** But those who act according to the perfectly taught Dhamma will cross the realm of Death, so difficult to cross.

**87–88.** Abandoning the dark way, let the wise man cultivate the bright path. Having gone from home to homelessness, let him yearn for that delight in detachment, so difficult to enjoy. Giving up sensual pleasures, with no attachment, let the wise man cleanse himself of defilements of the mind.

**89.** Those whose minds have reached full excellence in the factors of enlightenment, who, having renounced acquisitiveness, rejoice in not clinging to things — rid of cankers, glowing with wisdom, they have attained Nibbāna in this very life. *(This verse describes the arahant, dealt with more fully in the following chapter. The “cankers” (āśava) are the four basic defilements of sensual desire, desire for continued existence, false views and ignorance.)*

## **Chapter 7 – Arahantavagga: The Arahant or Perfected One**

**90.** The fever of passion exists not for him who has completed the journey, who is sorrowless and wholly set free, and has broken all ties.



**91.** The mindful ones exert themselves. They are not attached to any home; like swans that abandon the lake, they leave home after home behind.

**92.** Those who do not accumulate and are wise regarding food, whose object is the Void, the Unconditioned Freedom — their track cannot be traced, like that of birds in the air.

**93.** He whose cankers are destroyed and who is not attached to food, whose object is the Void, the Unconditioned Freedom — his path cannot be traced, like that of birds in the air.

**94.** Even the gods hold dear the wise one, whose senses are subdued like horses well trained by a charioteer, whose pride is destroyed and who is free from the cankers.

**95.** There is no more worldly existence for the wise one who, like the earth, resents nothing, who is firm as a high pillar and as pure as a deep pool free from mud.

**96.** Calm is his thought, calm his speech, and calm his deed, who, truly knowing, is wholly freed, perfectly tranquil and wise.

**97.** The man who is without blind faith, who knows the Uncreated, who has severed all links, destroyed all causes (for karma, good and evil), and thrown out all desires — he, truly, is the most excellent of men. *(In the Pali this verse presents a series of puns, and if the “underside” of each pun were to be translated, the verse would read thus: “The man who is faithless, ungrateful, a burglar, who destroys opportunities and eats vomit — he truly is the most excellent of men.”)*

**98.** Inspiring, indeed, is that place where Arahants dwell, be it a village, a forest, a vale, or a hill.

**99.** Inspiring are the forests in which worldlings find no pleasure. There the passionless will rejoice, for they seek no sensual pleasures.

## **Chapter 8 – Sahassavagga: The Thousands**

**100.** Better than a thousand useless words is one useful word, hearing which one attains peace.

**101.** Better than a thousand useless verses is one useful verse, hearing which one attains peace.

**102.** Better than reciting a hundred meaningless verses is the reciting of one verse of Dhamma, hearing which one attains peace.

**103.** Though one may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself.

**104–105.** Self-conquest is far better than the conquest of others. Not even a god, an angel, Māra or Brahmā can turn into defeat the victory of a person who is self-subdued and ever restrained in conduct. (*Brahmā: a high divinity in ancient Indian religion.*)

**106.** Though month after month for a hundred years one should offer sacrifices by the thousands, yet if only for a moment one should worship those of perfected minds that honor is indeed better than a century of sacrifice.

**107.** Though for a hundred years one should tend the sacrificial fire in the forest, yet if only for a moment one should

worship those of perfected minds, that worship is indeed better than a century of sacrifice.

**108.** Whatever gifts and oblations one seeking merit might offer in this world for a whole year, all that is not worth one fourth of the merit gained by revering the Upright Ones, which is truly excellent.

**109.** To one ever eager to revere and serve the elders, these four blessing accrue: long life and beauty, happiness and power.

**110.** Better it is to live one day virtuous and meditative than to live a hundred years immoral and uncontrolled.

**111.** Better it is to live one day wise and meditative than to live a hundred years foolish and uncontrolled.

**112.** Better it is to live one day strenuous and resolute than to live a hundred years sluggish and dissipated.

**113.** Better it is to live one day seeing the rise and fall of things than to live a hundred years without ever seeing the rise and fall of things.

**114.** Better it is to live one day seeing the Deathless than to live a hundred years without ever seeing the Deathless.

**115.** Better it is to live one day seeing the Supreme Truth than to live a hundred years without ever seeing the Supreme Truth.

## Chapter 9 – Pāpavagga: Evil

**116.** Hasten to do good; restrain your mind from evil. He who is slow in doing good, his mind delights in evil.

**117.** Should a person commit evil, let him not do it again and again. Let him not find pleasure therein, for painful is the accumulation of evil.

**118.** Should a person do good, let him do it again and again. Let him find pleasure therein, for blissful is the accumulation of good.

**119.** It may be well with the evil-doer as long as the evil ripens not. But when it does ripen, then the evil-doer sees (the painful results of) his evil deeds.

**120.** It may be ill with the doer of good as long as the good ripens not. But when it does ripen, then the doer of good sees (the pleasant results of) his good deeds.

**121.** Think not lightly of evil, saying, "It will not come to me." Drop by drop is the water pot filled. Likewise, the fool, gathering it little by little, fills himself with evil.

**122.** Think not lightly of good, saying, "It will not come to me." Drop by drop is the water pot filled. Likewise, the wise man, gathering it little by little, fills himself with good.

**123.** Just as a trader with a small escort and great wealth would avoid a perilous route, or just as one desiring to live avoids poison, even so should one shun evil.

**124.** If on the hand there is no wound, one may carry even poison in it. Poison does not affect one who is free from wounds. For him who does no evil, there is no ill.

**125.** Like fine dust thrown against the wind, evil falls back upon that fool who offends an inoffensive, pure and guiltless man.

**126.** Some are born in the womb; the wicked are born in hell; the devout go to heaven; the stainless pass into Nibbāna.

**127.** Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering into mountain clefts, nowhere in the world is there a place where one may escape from the results of evil deeds.

**128.** Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering into mountain clefts, nowhere in the world is there a place where one will not be overcome by death.

## **Chapter 10 – Daṇḍavagga: Violence**

**129.** All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

**130.** All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

**131.** One who, while himself seeking happiness, oppresses with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will not attain happiness hereafter.

**132.** One who, while himself seeking happiness, does not oppress with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will find happiness hereafter.

**133.** Speak not harshly to anyone, for those thus spoken to might retort. Indeed, angry speech hurts, and retaliation may overtake you.

**134.** If, like a broken gong, you silence yourself, you have approached Nibbāna, for vindictiveness is no longer in you.

**135.** Just as a cowherd drives the cattle to pasture with a staff, so do old age and death drive the life force of beings (from existence to existence).

**136.** When the fool commits evil deeds, he does not realize (their evil nature). The witless man is tormented by his own deeds, like one burnt by fire.

**137.** He who inflicts violence on those who are unarmed, and offends those who are inoffensive, will soon come upon one of these ten states:

**138–140.** Sharp pain, or disaster, bodily injury, serious illness, or derangement of mind, trouble from the government, or grave charges, loss of relatives, or loss of wealth, or houses destroyed by ravaging fire; upon dissolution of the body that ignorant man is born in hell.

**141.** Neither going about naked, nor matted locks, nor filth, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor smearing oneself with ashes and dust, nor sitting on the heels (in penance) can purify a mortal who has not overcome doubt.

**142.** Even though he be well-attired, yet if he is poised, calm, controlled and established in the holy life, having set aside violence towards all beings — he, truly, is a holy man, a renunciate, a monk.

**143.** Only rarely is there a man in this world who, restrained by modesty, avoids reproach, as a thoroughbred horse avoids the whip.

**144.** Like a thoroughbred horse touched by the whip, be strenuous, be filled with spiritual yearning. By faith and moral purity, by effort and meditation, by investigation of the truth, by being rich in knowledge and virtue, and by being mindful, destroy this unlimited suffering.

**145.** Irrigators regulate the waters, fletchers straighten arrow shafts, carpenters shape wood, and the good control themselves.

## Chapter 11 – Jarāvagga: Old Age

**146.** When this world is ever ablaze, why this laughter, why this jubilation? Shrouded in darkness, will you not see the light?

**147.** Behold this body — a painted image, a mass of heaped up sores, infirm, full of hankering — of which nothing is lasting or stable!

**148.** Fully worn out is this body, a nest of disease, and fragile. This foul mass breaks up, for death is the end of life.

**149.** These dove-colored bones are like gourds that lie scattered about in autumn. Having seen them, how can one seek delight?

**150.** This city (body) is built of bones, plastered with flesh and blood; within are decay and death, pride and jealousy.

**151.** Even gorgeous royal chariots wear out, and indeed this body too wears out. But the Dhamma of the Good does not age; thus the Good make it known to the good.

**152.** The man of little learning grows old like a bull. He grows only in bulk, but, his wisdom does not grow.

**153.** Through many a birth in saṃsāra have I wandered in vain, seeking the builder of this house (of life). Repeated birth is indeed suffering!

**154.** O house-builder, you are seen! You will not build this house again. For your rafters are broken and your ridgepole shattered. My mind has reached the Unconditioned; I have attained the destruction of craving. *(According to the commentary, these verses are the Buddha's "Song of Victory," his first utterance after his Enlightenment. The house is individualized existence in samsara, the house-builder craving, the rafters the passions and the ridge-pole ignorance.)*

**155.** Those who in youth have not led the holy life, or have failed to acquire wealth, languish like old cranes in the pond without fish.

**156.** Those who in youth have not lead the holy life, or have failed to acquire wealth, lie sighing over the past, like worn out arrows (shot from) a bow.

## **Chapter 12 – Attavagga: The Self**

**157.** If one holds oneself dear, one should diligently watch oneself. Let the wise man keep vigil during any of the three watches of the night.



**158.** One should first establish oneself in what is proper; then only should one instruct others. Thus the wise man will not be reproached.

**159.** One should do what one teaches others to do; if one would train others, one should be well controlled oneself. Difficult, indeed, is self-control.

**160.** One truly is the protector of oneself; who else could the protector be? With oneself fully controlled, one gains a mastery that is hard to gain.

**161.** The evil a witless man does by himself, born of himself and produced by himself, grinds him as a diamond grinds a hard gem.

**162.** Just as a single creeper strangles the tree on which it grows, even so, a man who is exceedingly depraved harms himself as only an enemy might wish.

**163.** Easy to do are things that are bad and harmful to oneself. But exceedingly difficult to do are things that are good and beneficial.

**164.** Whoever, on account of perverted views, scorns the Teaching of the Perfected Ones, the Noble and Righteous Ones — that fool, like the bamboo, produces fruits only for self destruction. *(Certain reeds of the bamboo family perish immediately after producing fruits.)*

**165.** By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one made pure. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another.

**166.** Let one not neglect one's own welfare for the sake of another, however great. Clearly understanding one's own welfare, let one be intent upon the good.

## **Chapter 13 – Lokavagga: The World**

**167.** Follow not the vulgar way; live not in heedlessness; hold not false views; linger not long in worldly existence.

**168.** Arise! Do not be heedless! Lead a righteous life. The righteous live happily both in this world and the next.

**169.** Lead a righteous life; lead not a base life. The righteous live happily both in this world and the next.

**170.** One who looks upon the world as a bubble and a mirage, him the King of Death sees not.

**171.** Come! Behold this world, which is like a decorated royal chariot. Here fools flounder, but the wise have no attachment to it.

**172.** He who having been heedless is heedless no more, illuminates this world like the moon freed from clouds.

**173.** He, who by good deeds covers the evil he has done, illuminates this world like the moon freed from clouds.

**174.** Blind is the world; here only a few possess insight. Only a few, like birds escaping from the net, go to realms of bliss.

**175.** Swans fly on the path of the sun; men pass through the air by psychic powers; the wise are led away from the world after vanquishing Māra and his host.

**176.** For a liar who has violated the one law (of truthfulness) who holds in scorn the hereafter, there is no evil that he cannot do.

**177.** Truly, misers fare not to heavenly realms; nor, indeed, do fools praise generosity. But the wise man rejoices in giving, and by that alone does he become happy hereafter.

**178.** Better than sole sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better even than lordship over all the worlds is the supramundane Fruition of Stream Entrance. (*Stream-entry (sotāpatti): the first stage of supramundane attainment.*)

## Chapter 14 – Buddhavagga: The Buddha

**179.** By what track can you trace that trackless Buddha of limitless range, whose victory nothing can undo, whom none of the vanquished defilements can ever pursue?

**180.** By what track can you trace that trackless Buddha of limitless range, in whom exists no longer, the entangling and embroiling craving that perpetuates becoming?

**181.** Those wise ones who are devoted to meditation and who delight in the calm of renunciation — such mindful ones, Supreme Buddhas, even the gods hold dear.

**182.** Hard is it to be born a man; hard is the life of mortals. Hard is it to gain the opportunity of hearing the Sublime Truth, and hard to encounter is the arising of the Buddhas.

**183.** To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one's mind — this is the teaching of the Buddhas.

**184.** Enduring patience is the highest austerity. “Nibbāna is supreme,” say the Buddhas. He is not a true monk who harms another, nor a true renunciate who oppresses others.

**185.** Not despising, not harming, restraint according to the code of monastic discipline, moderation in food, dwelling in solitude, devotion to meditation — this is the teaching of the Buddhas.

**186–187.** There is no satisfying sensual desires, even with the rain of gold coins. For sensual pleasures give little satisfaction and much pain. Having understood this, the wise man finds no delight even in heavenly pleasures. The disciple of the Supreme Buddha delights in the destruction of craving.

**188.** Driven only by fear, do men go for refuge to many places — to hills, woods, groves, trees and shrines.

**189.** Such, indeed, is no safe refuge; such is not the refuge supreme. Not by resorting to such a refuge is one released from all suffering.

**190–191.** He who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Teaching and his Order, penetrates with transcendental wisdom the Four Noble Truths — suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering. (*The Order: both the monastic Order (bhikkhu sangha) and the Order of Noble Ones (ariya sangha) who have reached the four supramundane stages.*)

**192.** This indeed is the safe refuge, this the refuge supreme. Having gone to such a refuge, one is released from all suffering.

**193.** Hard to find is the thoroughbred man (the Buddha); he is not born everywhere. Where such a wise man is born, that clan thrives happily.

**194.** Blessed is the birth of the Buddhas; blessed is the enunciation of the sacred Teaching; blessed is the harmony in the Order, and blessed is the spiritual pursuit of the united truth-seeker.

**195–196.** He who reveres those worthy of reverence, the Buddhas and their disciples, who have transcended all obstacles and passed beyond the reach of sorrow and lamentation — he who reveres such peaceful and fearless ones, his merit none can compute by any measure.

## **Chapter 15 – Sukhavagga: Happiness**

**197.** Happy indeed we live, friendly amidst the hostile. Amidst hostile men we dwell free from hatred.

**198.** Happy indeed we live, friendly amidst the afflicted (by craving). Amidst afflicted men we dwell free from affliction.

**199.** Happy indeed we live, free from avarice amidst the avaricious. Amidst the avaricious men we dwell free from avarice.

**200.** Happy indeed we live, we who possess nothing. Feeders on joy we shall be, like the Radiant Gods.

**201.** Victory begets enmity; the defeated dwell in pain. Happily the peaceful live, discarding both victory and defeat.

**202.** There is no fire like lust and no crime like hatred. There is no ill like the aggregates (of existence) and no bliss higher

than the peace (of Nibbāna). *(Aggregates (of existence) (khandha): the five groups of factors into which the Buddha analyzes the living being — material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.)*

**203.** Hunger is the worst disease, conditioned things the worst suffering. Knowing this as it really is, the wise realize Nibbāna, the highest bliss.

**204.** Health is the most precious gain and contentment the greatest wealth. A trustworthy person is the best kinsman, Nibbāna the highest bliss.

**205.** Having savored the taste of solitude and peace (of Nibbāna), pain-free and stainless he becomes, drinking deep the taste of the bliss of the Truth.

**206.** Good is it to see the Noble Ones; to live with them is ever blissful. One will always be happy by not encountering fools.

**207.** Indeed, he who moves in the company of fools grieves for longing. Association with fools is ever painful, like partnership with an enemy. But association with the wise is happy, like meeting one's own kinsmen.

**208.** Therefore, follow the Noble One, who is steadfast, wise, learned, dutiful and devout. One should follow only such a man, who is truly good and discerning, even as the moon follows the path of the stars.

## Chapter 16 – Piyavagga: Affection

**209.** Giving himself to things to be shunned and not exerting where exertion is needed, a seeker after pleasures, having given up his true welfare, envies those intent upon theirs.

**210.** Seek no intimacy with the beloved and also not with the unloved, for not to see the beloved and to see the unloved, both are painful.

**211.** Therefore hold nothing dear, for separation from the dear is painful. There are no bonds for those who have nothing beloved or unloved.

**212.** From endearment springs grief, from endearment springs fear. For one who is wholly free from endearment there is no grief, whence then fear?

**213.** From affection springs grief, from affection springs fear. For one who is wholly free from affection there is no grief, whence then fear?

**214.** From attachment springs grief, from attachment springs fear. For one who is wholly free from attachment there is no grief, whence then fear?

**215.** From lust springs grief, from lust springs fear. For one who is wholly free from lust there is no grief; whence then fear?

**216.** From craving springs grief, from craving springs fear. For one who is wholly free from craving there is no grief; whence then fear?

**217.** People hold dear him who embodies virtue and insight, who is principled, has realized the truth, and who himself does what he ought to be doing.

**218.** One who is intent upon the Ineffable (Nibbāna), dwells with mind inspired (by supramundane wisdom), and is no more bound by sense pleasures — such a man is called “One Bound Upstream.” (*One Bound Upstream: a non-returner (anagami).*)

**219.** When, after a long absence, a man safely returns from afar, his relatives, friends and well-wishers welcome him home on arrival.

**220.** As kinsmen welcome a dear one on arrival, even so his own good deeds will welcome the doer of good who has gone from this world to the next.

## **Chapter 17 – Kodhavagga: Anger**

**221.** One should give up anger, renounce pride, and overcome all fetters. Suffering never befalls him who clings not to mind and body and is detached.

**222.** He who checks rising anger as a charioteer checks a rolling chariot, him I call a true charioteer. Others only hold the reins.

**223.** Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth.



**224.** Speak the truth; yield not to anger; when asked, give even if you only have a little. By these three means can one reach the presence of the gods.

**225.** Those sages who are inoffensive and ever restrained in body, go to the Deathless State, where, having gone, they grieve no more.

**226.** Those who are ever vigilant, who discipline themselves day and night, and are ever intent upon Nibbāna — their defilements fade away.

**227.** O Atula! Indeed, this is an ancient practice, not one only of today: they blame those who remain silent, they blame those who speak much, they blame those who speak in moderation. There is none in the world who is not blamed.

**228.** There never was, there never will be, nor is there now, a person who is wholly blamed or wholly praised.

**229.** But the man whom the wise praise, after observing him day after day, is one of flawless character, wise, and endowed with knowledge and virtue.

**230.** Who can blame such a one, as worthy as a coin of refined gold? Even the gods praise him; by Brahmā, too, is he praised.

**231.** Let a man guard himself against irritability in bodily action; let him be controlled in deed. Abandoning bodily misconduct, let him practice good conduct in deed.

**232.** Let a man guard himself against irritability in speech; let him be controlled in speech. Abandoning verbal misconduct, let him practice good conduct in speech.

**233.** Let a man guard himself against irritability in thought; let him be controlled in mind. Abandoning mental misconduct, let him practice good conduct in thought.

**234.** The wise are controlled in bodily action, controlled in speech and controlled in thought. They are truly well-controlled.

## **Chapter 18 – Malavagga: Impurity**

**235.** Like a withered leaf are you now; death's messengers await you. You stand on the eve of your departure, yet you have made no provision for your journey!

**236.** Make an island for yourself! Strive hard and become wise! Rid of impurities and cleansed of stain, you shall enter the celestial abode of the Noble Ones.

**237.** Your life has come to an end now; You are setting forth into the presence of Yama, the king of death. No resting place is there for you on the way, yet you have made no provision for the journey!

**238.** Make an island unto yourself! Strive hard and become wise! Rid of impurities and cleansed of stain, you shall not come again to birth and decay.

**239.** One by one, little by little, moment by moment, a wise man should remove his own impurities, as a smith removes his dross from silver.

**240.** Just as rust arising from iron eats away the base from which it arises, even so, their own deeds lead transgressors to states of woe.

**241.** Non-repetition is the bane of scriptures; neglect is the bane of a home; slovenliness is the bane of personal appearance, and heedlessness is the bane of a guard.

**242.** Unchastity is the taint in a woman; niggardliness is the taint in a giver. Taints, indeed, are all evil things, both in this world and the next.

**243.** A worse taint than these is ignorance, the worst of all taints. Destroy this one taint and become taintless, O monks!

**244.** Easy is life for the shameless one who is impudent as a crow, is backbiting and forward, arrogant and corrupt.

**245.** Difficult is life for the modest one who always seeks purity, is detached and unassuming, clean in life, and discerning.

**246–247.** One who destroys life, utters lies, takes what is not given, goes to another man's wife, and is addicted to intoxicating drinks — such a man digs up his own root even in this world.

**248.** Know this, O good man: evil things are difficult to control. Let not greed and wickedness drag you to protracted misery.

**249.** People give according to their faith or regard. If one becomes discontented with the food and drink given by others, one does not attain meditative absorption, either by day or by night.

**250.** But he in who this (discontent) is fully destroyed, uprooted and extinct, he attains absorption, both by day and by night.

**251.** There is no fire like lust; there is no grip like hatred; there is no net like delusion; there is no river like craving.

**252.** Easily seen is the fault of others, but one's own fault is difficult to see. Like chaff one winnows another's faults, but hides one's own, even as a crafty Fowler hides behind sham branches.

**253.** He who seeks another's faults, who is ever censorious — his cankers grow. He is far from destruction of the cankers.

**254.** There is no track in the sky, and no recluse outside (the Buddha's dispensation). Mankind delights in worldliness, but the Buddhas are free from worldliness.

**255.** There is not track in the sky, and no recluse outside (the Buddha's dispensation). There are no conditioned things that are eternal, and no instability in the Buddhas. (*Recluse (samaṇa): here used in the special sense of those who have reached the four supramundane stages.*)

## Chapter 19 – Dhammatthavagga: The Just

**256.** Not by passing arbitrary judgments does a man become just; a wise man is he who investigates both right and wrong.

**257.** He who does not judge others arbitrarily, but passes judgment impartially according to the truth, that sagacious man is a guardian of law and is called just.

**258.** One is not wise because one speaks much. He who is peaceable, friendly and fearless is called wise.

**259.** A man is not versed in Dhamma because he speaks much. He who, after hearing a little Dhamma, realizes its truth directly and is not heedless of it, is truly versed in the Dhamma.

**260.** A monk is not an Elder because his head is gray. He is but ripe in age, and he is called one grown old in vain.

**261.** One in whom there is truthfulness, virtue, inoffensiveness, restraint and self-mastery, who is free from defilements and is wise — he is truly called an Elder.

**262.** Not by mere eloquence nor by beauty of form does a man become accomplished, if he is jealous, selfish and deceitful.

**263.** But he in whom these are wholly destroyed, uprooted and extinct, and who has cast out hatred — that wise man is truly accomplished.

**264.** Not by shaven head does a man who is undisciplined and untruthful become a monk. How can he who is full of desire and greed be a monk?

**265.** He who wholly subdues evil both small and great is called a monk, because he has overcome all evil.

**266.** He is not a monk just because he lives on others' alms. Not by adopting outward form does one become a true monk.

**267.** Whoever here (in the Dispensation) lives a holy life, transcending both merit and demerit, and walks with understanding in this world — he is truly called a monk.

**268.** Not by observing silence does one become a sage, if he be foolish and ignorant. But that man is wise who, as if holding a balance-scale accepts only the good.

**269.** The sage (thus) rejecting the evil, is truly a sage. Since he comprehends both (present and future) worlds, he is called a sage.

**270.** He is not noble who injures living beings. He is called noble because he is harmless towards all living beings.

**271–272.** Not by rules and observances, not even by much learning, nor by gain of absorption, nor by a life of seclusion, nor by thinking, “I enjoy the bliss of renunciation, which is not experienced by the worldling” should you, O monks, rest content, until the utter destruction of cankers (Arahantship) is reached.

## **Chapter 20 – Maggavagga: The Path**

**273.** Of all the paths the Eightfold Path is the best; of all the truths the Four Noble Truths are the best; of all things passionlessness is the best: of men the Seeing One (the Buddha) is the best.

**274.** This is the only path; there is none other for the purification of insight. Tread this path, and you will bewilder Māra.

**275.** Walking upon this path you will make an end of suffering. Having discovered how to pull out the thorn of lust, I make known the path.

**276.** You yourselves must strive; the Buddhas only point the way. Those meditative ones who tread the path are released from the bonds of Māra.

**277.** "All conditioned things are impermanent" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.

**278.** "All conditioned things are unsatisfactory" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.

**279.** "All things are not-self" — when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to purification.

**280.** The idler who does not exert himself when he should, who though young and strong is full of sloth, with a mind full of vain thoughts — such an indolent man does not find the path to wisdom.

**281.** Let a man be watchful of speech, well controlled in mind, and not commit evil in bodily action. Let him purify these three courses of action, and win the path made known by the Great Sage.

**282.** Wisdom springs from meditation; without meditation wisdom wanes. Having known these two paths of progress and decline, let a man so conduct himself that his wisdom may increase.

**283.** Cut down the forest (lust), but not the tree; from the forest springs fear. Having cut down the forest and the underbrush (desire), be passionless, O monks! (*The meaning*

*of this injunction is: "Cut down the forest of lust, but do not mortify the body.)*

**284.** For so long as the underbrush of desire, even the most subtle, of a man towards a woman is not cut down, his mind is in bondage, like the sucking calf to its mother.

**285.** Cut off your affection in the manner of a man plucks with his hand an autumn lotus. Cultivate only the path to peace, Nibbāna, as made known by the Exalted One.

**286.** "Here shall I live during the rains, here in winter and summer" — thus thinks the fool. He does not realize the danger (that death might intervene).

**287.** As a great flood carries away a sleeping village, so death seizes and carries away the man with a clinging mind, doting on his children and cattle.

**288.** For him who is assailed by death there is no protection by kinsmen. None there are to save him — no sons, nor father, nor relatives.

**289.** Realizing this fact, let the wise man, restrained by morality, hasten to clear the path leading to Nibbāna.

## **Chapter 21 – Pakiṇṇakavagga: Miscellaneous**

**290.** If by renouncing a lesser happiness one may realize a greater happiness, let the wise man renounce the lesser, having regard for the greater.



**291.** Entangled by the bonds of hate, he who seeks his own happiness by inflicting pain on others, is never delivered from hatred.

**292.** The cankers only increase for those who are arrogant and heedless, who leave undone what should be done and do what should not be done.

**293.** The cankers cease for those mindful and clearly comprehending ones who always earnestly practice mindfulness of the body, who do not resort to what should not be done, and steadfastly pursue what should be done.

**294.** Having slain mother (craving), father (self-conceit), two warrior-kings (eternalism and nihilism), and destroyed a country (sense organs and sense objects) together with its treasurer (attachment and lust), ungrieving goes the holy man.

**295.** Having slain mother, father, two brāhmaṇ kings (two extreme views), and a tiger as the fifth (the five mental hindrances), ungrieving goes the holy man.

**296.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the Recollection of the Qualities of the Buddha.

**297.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the Recollection of the Qualities of the Dhamma.

**298.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the Recollection of the Qualities of the Saṅgha.

**299.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice Mindfulness of the Body.

**300.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily whose minds by day and night delight in the practice of non-violence.

**301.** Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily whose minds by day and night delight in the practice of meditation.

**302.** Difficult is life as a monk; difficult is it to delight therein. Also difficult and sorrowful is the household life. Suffering comes from association with unequals; suffering comes from wandering in saṃsāra. Therefore, be not an aimless wanderer, be not a pursuer of suffering.

**303.** He who is full of faith and virtue, and possesses good repute and wealth — he is respected everywhere, in whatever land he travels.

**304.** The good shine from afar, like the Himalaya mountains. But the wicked are unseen, like arrows shot in the night.

**305.** He who sits alone, sleeps alone, and walks alone, who is strenuous and subdues himself alone, will find delight in the solitude of the forest.

## **Chapter 22 – Nirayavagga: Hell**

**306.** The liar goes to the state of woe; also he who, having done (wrong), says, “I did not do it.” Men of base actions both, on departing they share the same destiny in the other world.

**307.** There are many evil characters and uncontrolled men wearing the saffron robe. These wicked men will be born in states of woe because of their evil deeds.

**308.** It would be better to swallow a red-hot iron ball, blazing like fire, than as an immoral and uncontrolled monk to eat the alms of the people.

**309.** Four misfortunes befall the reckless man who consorts with another's wife: acquisition of demerit, disturbed sleep, ill-repute, and (rebirth in) states of woe.

**310.** Such a man acquires demerit and an unhappy birth in the future. Brief is the pleasure of the frightened man and woman, and the king imposes heavy punishment. Hence, let no man consort with another's wife.

**311.** Just as kusa grass wrongly handled cuts the hand, even so, a recluse's life wrongly lived drags one to states of woe.

**312.** Any loose act, any corrupt observance, any life of questionable celibacy — none of these bear much fruit.

**313.** If anything is to be done, let one do it with sustained vigor. A lax monastic life stirs up the dust of passions all the more.

**314.** An evil deed is better left undone, for such a deed torments one afterwards. But a good deed is better done, doing which one repents not later.

**315.** Just as a border city is closely guarded both within and without, even so, guard yourself. Do not let slip this opportunity (for spiritual growth). For those who let slip this opportunity grieve indeed when consigned to hell.

**316.** Those who are ashamed of what they should not be ashamed of, and are not ashamed of what they should be ashamed of — upholding false views, they go to states of woe.

**317.** Those who see something to fear where there is nothing to fear, and see nothing to fear where there is something to fear — upholding false views, they go to states of woe.

**318.** Those who imagine evil where there is none, and do not see evil where it is — upholding false views, they go to states of woe.

**319.** Those who discern the wrong as wrong and the right as right — upholding right views, they go to realms of bliss.

## **Chapter 23 – Nāgavagga: The Elephant**

**320.** As an elephant in the battlefield withstands arrows shot from bows all around, even so shall I endure abuse. There are many, indeed, who lack virtue.

**321.** A tamed elephant is led into a crowd, and the king mounts a tamed elephant. Best among men is the subdued one who endures abuse.

**322.** Excellent are well-trained mules, thoroughbred Sindhu horses and noble tusker elephants. But better still is the man who has subdued himself.

**323.** Not by these mounts, however, would one go to the Untrodden Land (Nibbāna), as one who is self-tamed goes by his own tamed and well-controlled mind.

**324.** Musty during rut, the tusker named Dhanapālaka is uncontrollable. Held in captivity, the tusker does not touch a morsel, but only longingly calls to mind the elephant forest.

**325.** When a man is sluggish and gluttonous, sleeping and rolling around in bed like a fat domestic pig, that sluggard undergoes rebirth again and again.

**326.** Formerly this mind wandered about as it liked, where it wished and according to its pleasure, but now I shall thoroughly master it with wisdom as a mahout controls with his ankus an elephant in rut.

**327.** Delight in heedfulness! Guard well your thoughts! Draw yourself out of this bog of evil, even as an elephant draws himself out of the mud.

**328.** If for company you find a wise and prudent friend who leads a good life, you should, overcoming all impediments, keep his company joyously and mindfully.

**329.** If for company you cannot find a wise and prudent friend who leads a good life, then, like a king who leaves behind a conquered kingdom, or like a lone elephant in the elephant forest, you should go your way alone.

**330.** Better it is to live alone; there is no fellowship with a fool. Live alone and do no evil; be carefree like an elephant in the elephant forest.

**331.** Good are friends when need arises; good is contentment with just what one has; good is merit when life is at an end, and good is the abandoning of all suffering (through Arahantship).

**332.** In this world, good it is to serve one's mother, good it is to serve one's father, good it is to serve the monks, and good it is to serve the holy men.

**333.** Good is virtue until life's end, good is faith that is steadfast, good is the acquisition of wisdom, and good is the avoidance of evil.

## Chapter 24 – Taṇhavagga: Craving

**334.** The craving of one given to heedless living grows like a creeper. Like the monkey seeking fruits in the forest, he leaps from life to life (tasting the fruit of his kamma).

**335.** Whoever is overcome by this wretched and sticky craving, his sorrows grow like grass after the rains.

**336.** But whoever overcomes this wretched craving, so difficult to overcome, from him sorrows fall away like water from a lotus leaf.

**337.** This I say to you: Good luck to all assembled here! Dig up the root of craving, like one in search of the fragrant root of the bīraṇa grass. Let not Māra crush you again and again, as a flood crushes a reed.

**338.** Just as a tree, though cut down, sprouts up again if its roots remain uncut and firm, even so, until the craving that lies dormant is rooted out, suffering springs up again and again.

**339.** The misguided man in whom the thirty-six currents of craving strongly rush toward pleasurable objects, is swept away by the flood of his passionate thoughts. (*The thirty-six*

*currents of craving: the three cravings — for sensual pleasure, for continued existence, and for annihilation — in relation to each of the twelve bases — the six sense organs, including mind, and their corresponding objects.)*

**340.** Everywhere these currents flow, and the creeper (of craving) sprouts and grows. Seeing that the creeper has sprung up, cut off its root with wisdom.

**341.** Flowing in (from all objects) and watered by craving, feelings of pleasure arise in beings. Bent on pleasures and seeking enjoyment, these men fall prey to birth and decay.

**342.** Beset by craving, people run about like an entrapped hare. Held fast by mental fetters, they come to suffering again and again for a long time.

**343.** Beset by craving, people run about like an entrapped hare. Therefore, one who yearns to be passion-free should destroy his own craving.

**344.** There is one who, turning away from desire (for household life) takes to the life of the forest (i.e., of a monk). But after being freed from the household, he runs back to it. Behold that man! Though freed, he runs back to that very bondage! *(This verse, in the original, puns with the Pali word vana meaning both “desire” and “forest.”)*

**345–346.** That is not a strong fetter, the wise say, which is made of iron, wood or hemp. But the infatuation and longing for jewels and ornaments, children and wives — that, they say, is a far stronger fetter, which pulls one downward and, though seemingly loose, is hard to remove. This, too, the wise cut off. Giving up sensual pleasure, and without any longing, they renounce the world.

**347.** Those who are lust-infatuated fall back into the swirling current (of saṃsāra) like a spider on its self-spun web. This, too, the wise cut off. Without any longing, they abandon all suffering and renounce the world.

**348.** Let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of the present, and cross over to the farther shore of existence. With mind wholly liberated, you shall come no more to birth and death.

**349.** For a person tormented by evil thoughts, who is passion-dominated and given to the pursuit of pleasure, his craving steadily grows. He makes the fetter strong, indeed.

**350.** He who delights in subduing evil thoughts, who meditates on the impurities and is ever mindful — it is he who will make an end of craving and rend asunder Māra's fetter.

**351.** He who has reached the goal, is fearless, free from craving, passionless, and has plucked out the thorns of existence — for him this is the last body.

**352.** He who is free from craving and attachment, is perfect in uncovering the true meaning of the Teaching, and knows the arrangement of the sacred texts in correct sequence — he, indeed, is the bearer of his final body. He is truly called the profoundly wise one, the great man.

**353.** A victor am I over all, all have I known. Yet unattached am I to all that is conquered and known. Abandoning all, I am freed through the destruction of craving. Having thus directly comprehended all by myself, whom shall I call my teacher? *(This was the Buddha's reply to a wandering ascetic who asked him about his teacher. The Buddha's answer shows that Supreme Enlightenment was his own*



*unique attainment, which he had not learned from anyone else.)*

**354.** The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts; the taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes; the delight in Dhamma excels all delights. The Craving-Freed vanquishes all suffering.

**355.** Riches ruin only the foolish, not those in quest of the Beyond. By craving for riches the witless man ruins himself as well as others.

**356.** Weeds are the bane of fields, lust is the bane of mankind. Therefore, what is offered to those free of lust yields abundant fruit.

**357.** Weeds are the bane of fields, hatred is the bane of mankind. Therefore, what is offered to those free of hatred yields abundant fruit.

**358.** Weeds are the bane of fields, delusion is the bane of mankind. Therefore, what is offered to those free of delusion yields abundant fruit.

**359.** Weeds are the bane of fields, desire is the bane of mankind. Therefore, what is offered to those free of desire yields abundant fruit.

## **Chapter 25 – Bhikkhuvagga: The Monk**

**360.** Good is restraint over the eye; good is restraint over the ear; good is restraint over the nose; good is restraint over the tongue.

**361.** Good is restraint in the body; good is restraint in speech; good is restraint in thought. Restraint everywhere is good. The monk restrained in every way is freed from all suffering.

**362.** He who has control over his hands, feet and tongue; who is fully controlled, delights in inward development, is absorbed in meditation, keeps to himself and is contented — him do people call a monk.

**363.** That monk who has control over his tongue, is moderate in speech, unassuming and who explains the Teaching in both letter and spirit — whatever he says is pleasing.

**364.** The monk who abides in the Dhamma, delights in the Dhamma, meditates on the Dhamma, and bears the Dhamma well in mind — he does not fall away from the sublime Dhamma.

**365.** One should not despise what one has received, nor envy the gains of others. The monk who envies the gains of others does not attain to meditative absorption.

**366.** A monk who does not despise what he has received, even though it be little, who is pure in livelihood and unremitting in effort — him even the gods praise.

**367.** He who has no attachment whatsoever for the mind and body, who does not grieve for what he has not — he is truly called a monk.

**368.** The monk who abides in universal love and is deeply devoted to the Teaching of the Buddha attains the peace of Nibbāna, the bliss of the cessation of all conditioned things.

**369.** Empty this boat, O monk! Emptied, it will sail lightly. Rid of lust and hatred, you shall reach Nibbāna.

**370.** Cut off the five, abandon the five, and cultivate the five. The monk who has overcome the five bonds is called one who has crossed the flood. *(The five to be cut off are the five "lower fetters": self-illusion, doubt, belief in rites and rituals, lust and ill-will. The five to be abandoned are the five "higher fetters": craving for the divine realms with form, craving for the formless realms, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. Stream-enterers and once-returners cut off the first three fetters, non-returners the next two and Arahants the last five. The five to be cultivated are the five spiritual faculties: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. The five bonds are: greed, hatred, delusion, false views, and conceit.)*

**371.** Meditate, O monk! Do not be heedless. Let not your mind whirl on sensual pleasures. Heedless, do not swallow a red-hot iron ball, lest you cry when burning, "O this is painful!"

**372.** There is no meditative concentration for him who lacks insight, and no insight for him who lacks meditative concentration. He in whom are found both meditative concentration and insight, indeed, is close to Nibbāna.

**373.** The monk who has retired to a solitary abode and calmed his mind, who comprehends the Dhamma with insight, in him there arises a delight that transcends all human delights.

**374.** Whenever he sees with insight the rise and fall of the aggregates, he is full of joy and happiness. To the discerning one this reflects the Deathless. *(Aggregates (of existence) (khandha): the five groups of factors into which the Buddha*

*analyzes the living being — material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.)*

**375.** Control of the senses, contentment, restraint according to the code of monastic discipline — these form the basis of holy life here for the wise monk.

**376.** Let him associate with friends who are noble, energetic, and pure in life, let him be cordial and refined in conduct. Thus, full of joy, he will make an end of suffering.

**377.** Just as the jasmine creeper sheds its withered flowers, even so, O monks, should you totally shed lust and hatred!

**378.** The monk who is calm in body, calm in speech, calm in thought, well-composed and who has spewn out worldliness — he, truly, is called serene.

**379.** By oneself one must censure oneself and scrutinize oneself. The self-guarded and mindful monk will always live in happiness.

**380.** One is one's own protector, one is one's own refuge. Therefore, one should control oneself, even as a trader controls a noble steed.

**381.** Full of joy, full of faith in the Teaching of the Buddha, the monk attains the Peaceful State, the bliss of cessation of conditioned things.

**382.** That monk who while young devotes himself to the Teaching of the Buddha illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds.

## Chapter 26 – Brāhmaṇavagga: The Holy Man

**383.** Exert yourself, O holy man! Cut off the stream (of craving), and discard sense desires. Knowing the destruction of all the conditioned things, become, O holy man, the knower of the Uncreated (Nibbāna)! (*"Holy man" is used as a makeshift rendering for brāhmaṇa, intended to reproduce the ambiguity of the Indian word. Originally men of spiritual stature, by the time of the Buddha the Brahmāns had turned into a privileged priesthood which defined itself by means of birth and lineage rather than by genuine inner sanctity. The Buddha attempted to restore to the word brāhmaṇa its original connotation by identifying the true "holy man" as the arahant, who merits the title through his own inward purity and holiness regardless of family lineage. The contrast between the two meanings is highlighted in verses 393 and 396. Those who led a contemplative life dedicated to gaining Arahantship could also be called Brahmāns, as in verses 383, 389, and 390.*)

**384.** When a holy man has reached the summit of two paths (meditative concentration and insight), he knows the truth and all his fetters fall away.

**385.** He for whom there is neither this shore nor the other shore, nor yet both, he who is free of cares and is unfettered — him do I call a holy man. (*This shore: the six sense organs; the other shore: their corresponding objects; both: I-ness and my-ness.*)

**386.** He who is meditative, stainless and settled, whose work is done and who is free from cankers, having reached the highest goal — him do I call a holy man.

**387.** The sun shines by day, the moon shines by night. The warrior shines in armor, the holy man shines in meditation. But the Buddha shines resplendent all day and all night.

**388.** Because he has discarded evil, he is called a holy man. Because he is serene in conduct, he is called a recluse. And because he has renounced his impurities, he is called a renunciate.

**389.** One should not strike a holy man, nor should a holy man, when struck, give way to anger. Shame on him who strikes a holy man, and more shame on him who gives way to anger.

**390.** Nothing is better for a holy man than when he holds his mind back from what is endearing. To the extent the intent to harm wears away, to that extent does suffering subside.

**391.** He who does no evil in deed, word and thought, who is restrained in these three ways — him do I call a holy man.

**392.** Just as a brāhmaṇ priest reveres his sacrificial fire, even so should one devoutly revere the person from whom one has learned the Dhamma taught by the Buddha.

**393.** Not by matted hair, nor by lineage, nor by birth does one become a holy man. But he in whom truth and righteousness exist — he is pure, he is a holy man.

**394.** What is the use of your matted hair, O witless man? What of your garment of antelope's hide? Within you is the tangle (of passion); only outwardly do you cleanse yourself. *(In the time of the Buddha, such ascetic practices as wearing*

*matted hair and garments of hides were considered marks of holiness.)*

**395.** The person who wears a robe made of rags, who is lean, with veins showing all over the body, and who meditates alone in the forest — him do I call a holy man.

**396.** I do not call him a holy man because of his lineage or high-born mother. If he is full of impeding attachments, he is just a supercilious man. But who is free from impediments and clinging — him do I call a holy man.

**397.** He who, having cut off all fetters, trembles no more, who has overcome all attachments and is emancipated — him do I call a holy man.

**398.** He who has cut off the thong (of hatred), the band (of craving), and the rope (of false views), together with the appurtenances (latent evil tendencies), he who has removed the crossbar (of ignorance) and is enlightened — him do I call a holy man.

**399.** He who without resentment endures abuse, beating and punishment; whose power, real might, is patience — him do I call a holy man.

**400.** He who is free from anger, is devout, virtuous, without craving, self-subdued and bears his final body — him do I call a holy man.

**401.** Like water on a lotus leaf, or a mustard seed on the point of a needle, he who does not cling to sensual pleasures — him do I call a holy man.

**402.** He who in this very life realizes for himself the end of suffering, who has laid aside the burden and become emancipated — him do I call a holy man.

**403.** He who has profound knowledge, who is wise, skilled in discerning the right or wrong path, and has reached the highest goal — him do I call a holy man.

**404.** He who holds aloof from householders and ascetics alike, and wanders about with no fixed abode and but few wants — him do I call a holy man.

**405.** He who has renounced violence towards all living beings, weak or strong, who neither kills nor causes others to kill — him do I call a holy man.

**406.** He who is friendly amidst the hostile, peaceful amidst the violent, and unattached amidst the attached — him do I call a holy man.

**407.** He whose lust and hatred, pride and hypocrisy have fallen off like a mustard seed from the point of a needle — him do I call a holy man.

**408.** He who utters gentle, instructive and truthful words, who imprecates none — him do I call a holy man.

**409.** He who in this world takes nothing that is not given to him, be it long or short, small or big, good or bad — him do I call a holy man.

**410.** He who wants nothing of either this world or the next, who is desire-free and emancipated — him do I call a holy man.



**411.** He who has no attachment, who through perfect knowledge is free from doubts and has plunged into the Deathless — him do I call a holy man.

**412.** He who in this world has transcended the ties of both merit and demerit, who is sorrowless, stainless and pure — him do I call a holy man.

**413.** He, who, like the moon, is spotless and pure, serene and clear, who has destroyed the delight in existence — him do I call a holy man.

**414.** He who, having traversed this miry, perilous and delusive round of existence, has crossed over and reached the other shore; who is meditative, calm, free from doubt, and, clinging to nothing, has attained to Nibbāna — him do I call a holy man.

**415.** He who, having abandoned sensual pleasures, has renounced the household life and become a homeless one; has destroyed both sensual desire and continued existence — him do I call a holy man.

**416.** He who, having abandoned craving, has renounced the household life and become a homeless one, has destroyed both craving and continued existence — him do I call a holy man.

**417.** He who, casting off human bonds and transcending heavenly ties, is wholly delivered of all bondages — him do I call a holy man.

**418.** He who, having cast off likes and dislikes, has become tranquil, is rid of the substrata of existence and like a hero has conquered all the worlds — him do I call a holy man.

**419.** He who in every way knows the death and rebirth of all beings, and is totally detached, blessed and enlightened — him do I call a holy man.

**420.** He whose track no gods, no angels, no humans trace, the arahant who has destroyed all cankers — him do I call a holy man.

**421.** He who clings to nothing of the past, present and future, who has no attachment and holds on to nothing — him do I call a holy man.

**422.** He, the Noble, the Excellent, the Heroic, the Great Sage, the Conqueror, the Passionless, the Pure, the Enlightened one — him do I call a holy man.

**423.** He who knows his former births, who sees heaven and hell, who has reached the end of births and attained to the perfection of insight, the sage who has reached the summit of spiritual excellence — him do I call a holy man.



## *ANNEX 2*

### The Great Establishing of Mindfulness Discourse

#### Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (DN 22)

Translated from the pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu© 2000 .-  
Alternate translation: Burma Pitaka Assn.

(In <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.22.0.than.html>  
-free updated version retrieved from  
<https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/DN/DN22.html> on  
Mar.28,2021)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kurus. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks.”

“Lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “This is the direct path<sup>1</sup> for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishing of mindfulness. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent,<sup>2</sup> alert,<sup>3</sup> & mindful<sup>4</sup>—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.<sup>5</sup>

#### A. Body

“And how does a monk remain focused on the body in & of itself?

[1] “There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect and establishing mindfulness to the fore.<sup>6</sup> Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or

breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body';<sup>7</sup> he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication';<sup>8</sup> he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.' Just as a dexterous turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, discerns, 'I am making a long turn,' or when making a short turn discerns, 'I am making a short turn'; in the same way the monk, when breathing in long, discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' ... He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[2] "And further, when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

“In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[3] “And further, when going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away... when flexing & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert.

“In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[4] “And further... just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans,

kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,' in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: 'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[5] "And further... just as a dexterous butcher or his apprentice, having killed a cow, would sit at a crossroads cutting it up into pieces, the monk reflects on this very body—however it stands, however it is disposed—in terms of properties: 'In this body there is the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.'<sup>9</sup>

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally

& externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

[6] "And further, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, he applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

"Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, being chewed by crows, being chewed by vultures, being chewed by hawks, being chewed by dogs, being chewed by hyenas, being chewed by various other creatures... a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons... a fleshless skeleton smeared with



blood, connected with tendons... a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons... bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull... the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells... the bones piled up, more than a year old... the bones decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself.

## B. Feelings

"And how does a monk remain focused on feelings in & of themselves? There is the case where a monk, when feeling a painful feeling, discerns, 'I am feeling a painful feeling.' When feeling a pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a pleasant feeling.' When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, he discerns, 'I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.'

“When feeling a painful feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a painful feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a painful feeling not of the flesh.’ When feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a pleasant feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a pleasant feeling not of the flesh.’ When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling of the flesh.’ When feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh, he discerns, ‘I am feeling a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling not of the flesh.’<sup>10</sup>

“In this way he remains focused internally on feelings in & of themselves, or externally on feelings in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on feelings in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to feelings, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to feelings. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are feelings’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on feelings in & of themselves.

### C. Mind

“And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns, ‘The mind has passion.’ When the mind is without passion, he discerns, ‘The mind is without passion.’ When the mind has aversion, he discerns, ‘The mind has aversion.’ When the mind is without aversion, he discerns, ‘The mind is without aversion.’ When the mind has delusion,

he discerns, 'The mind has delusion.' When the mind is without delusion, he discerns, 'The mind is without delusion.'<sup>11</sup>

"When the mind is constricted, he discerns, 'The mind is constricted.' When the mind is scattered, he discerns, 'The mind is scattered.'<sup>12</sup> When the mind is enlarged,<sup>13</sup> he discerns, 'The mind is enlarged.' When the mind is not enlarged, he discerns, 'The mind is not enlarged.' When the mind is surpassed, he discerns, 'The mind is surpassed.' When the mind is unsurpassed, he discerns, 'The mind is unsurpassed.' When the mind is concentrated, he discerns, 'The mind is concentrated.' When the mind is not concentrated, he discerns, 'The mind is not concentrated.' When the mind is released,<sup>14</sup> he discerns, 'The mind is released.' When the mind is not released, he discerns, 'The mind is not released.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the mind in & of itself, or externally on the mind in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the mind in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a mind' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself.

#### D. Mental Qualities

"And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves?

[1] "There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances? There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns, 'There is sensual desire present within me.' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns, 'There is no sensual desire present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen.<sup>15</sup> And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of sensual desire that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances.

[2] "And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates. And how does a monk remain focused

on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates? There is the case where a monk [discerns]: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.'<sup>16</sup>

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five clinging-aggregates.

[3] "And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media? There is the case where he discerns the eye, he discerns forms, he discerns the fetter that arises dependent on both.<sup>17</sup> He discerns how there is the arising of an unarisen fetter. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of a fetter once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no further appearance in the future of a fetter that has been

abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining sense media: ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

"In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that 'There are mental qualities' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the sixfold internal & external sense media.

[4] "And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening? There is the case where, there being mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is present within me.' Or, there being no mindfulness as a factor for awakening present within, he discerns, 'Mindfulness as a factor for awakening is not present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening. And he discerns how there is the culmination of the development of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.<sup>18</sup> [The same formula is repeated for the

remaining factors for awakening: analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, & equanimity.]

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the seven factors for awakening.

[5] “And further, the monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths. And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths? There is the case where he discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress...This is the origination of stress...This is the cessation of stress...This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.’<sup>19</sup>

[a] “Now what is the noble truth of stress? Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful; separation from the loved is stressful; not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

“And what is birth? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of [sense] spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

“And what is aging? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

“And what is death? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

“And what is sorrow? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

“And what is lamentation? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

“And what is pain? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

“And what is distress? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.



"And what is despair? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

"And what is the stress of association with the unbeloved? There is the case where undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations occur to one; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one's harm, who wish for one's discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called the stress of association with the unbeloved.

"And what is the stress of separation from the loved? There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

"And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted. In beings subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging... illness... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

“And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful.

“This is called the noble truth of stress.

[b] “And what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., sensuality-craving, becoming-craving, and non-becoming-craving.

“And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when dwelling, does it dwell? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

“Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

“Eye-consciousness....	Ear-consciousness....	Nose-
consciousness....	Tongue-consciousness....	Body-
consciousness....	Intellect-consciousness....	

“Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

“Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

“Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

“Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

“Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

“Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

“Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

[c] “And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

"And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

"And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

"The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body.... The intellect....

"Forms.... Sounds.... Aromas.... Tastes.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas....

"Eye-consciousness.... Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness....

"Eye-contact.... Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact....

"Feeling born of eye-contact.... Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

"Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of aromas.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

"Intention for forms.... Intention for sounds.... Intention for aromas.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas....

“Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for aromas.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

“Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at aromas.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

“Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of aromas.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

“This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

[d] “And what is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress? Just this very noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“And what is right view? Knowledge with reference to stress, knowledge with reference to the origination of stress, knowledge with reference to the cessation of stress, knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

And what is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for freedom from ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual misconduct: This is called right action.

“And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This is called right livelihood.

“And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.

“And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

“And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed

thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.

“This is called the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“In this way he remains focused internally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or externally on mental qualities in & of themselves, or both internally & externally on mental qualities in & of themselves. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities. Or his mindfulness that ‘There are mental qualities’ is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by [not clinging to] anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the four noble truths.

E. Conclusion

"Now, if anyone would develop these four establishing of mindfulness in this way for seven years, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"Let alone seven years. If anyone would develop these four establishing of mindfulness in this way for six years... five... four... three... two years... one year... seven months... six months... five... four... three... two months... one month... half a month, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"Let alone half a month. If anyone would develop these four establishing of mindfulness in this way for seven days, one of two fruits can be expected for him: either gnosis right here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.

"‘This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishing of mindfulness.’ Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.





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